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ATLA

A Story of the Lost Island

Smith, John, 1886

By MRS. J. GREGORY SMITH

AUTHOR OF "DAWN TO SUNRISE" "SEOLA" "SELMA" ETC.

(By Ann Seala!)

*"Temples, towers, and domes of many stories
There lie buried in an ocean grave
Undescried, save when their golden glories
Gleam at sunset through the lighted wave"*

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1886

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INTRODUCTION.

*"Where now are seen aerial gardens, height on height
Rising like Media's mountains crowned with wood?
Where the fane of Belus now?"*

HOWEVER the modern mind may exult in the discoveries and inventions of the present age, it must concede that little has been added to the civilization of the past, while much has certainly been lost. The men sometimes called primitive were not savages. The oldest written characters of which we have the key prove themselves not only richest in power of expression, but reveal startling facts connected with prehistoric society. In massive architecture, in naval structures, in tremendous mechanical appliances, in agriculture and peaceful commerce, and in the domestication of the lower animals, no less than in language as a vehicle for thought, the nations of antiquity attained a marvellous perfection. It would seem

that almost as many arts have been lost as have been preserved.

Who now can manufacture transparent gold, malleable glass, and quenchless lamps ; construct garden ships, and self-directing magnetic chariots, build hanging gardens, or elevated viaducts and aqueducts of Cyclopean proportion, such as are found in the ruins of Central and South America ? A recent explorer remarks : “ The Incas tempered copper to an edge keen as steel ; they cut jewels with an art that modern lapidaries cannot imitate ; their colors are as lasting as their architecture ; under their political economy millions of people lived as one family.”

Who now will hew temples and cities of night under the rocky ribs of mountains ? What modern chisel can restore the flinty statues of Elephanta, Ellora, and Ajunta, whose sculptors “ built like giants and finished like jewellers ? ” Where is the artist can carve and color marble to rival living flesh and finish statues whose diamond eyes seem to follow the beholder ? Where the scholar who can write a page of history with one dash of the pen ?

Were not the metaphysics and cosmogonies of Hindu philosophers more profound and far-reaching than our own? Where are our astronomical and geological calculations that stretch backward and forward through a kalpa, a period of time expressed by a unit and sixty cyphers? In the ancient esoteric doctrine is contained all that mere man can know of the origin of the universe, the laws of force, and the mystery of human existence. The Gommerean mind may be more clear and methodical in detail, but the root-thought will ever be found with the Hindu mystic and dreamer.

Did not the priests of Egypt use the telephone and audiphone, or their equivalent, and penetrate the mysteries of magnetism as moderns have never done?

What monarch now will yoke the lion to his car, or tame the savage ounce, or use a serpent for a walking-stick? And what theatrical transformation scene at the present day equals the celebration of the Egyptian and Greek mysteries?

It may be asked, What was the source of this perfected civilization? There is much evidence

to prove that the impress was from the West to the East, from America to Asia; that the grand canals of Atlantis, no longer a fabled island, were the gateways through which issued the arts, sciences, and whatever else contributes to that material prosperity which is at once the blessing, or the bane, of national existence.

The author of the following story has been for many years collecting materials for a study of this wonderful country, the Merope of Theopompus, called by the Greeks The Garden of the Hesperides, and by the Argonauts the Island of Flowers; and has, under the guise of fiction, endeavored to embody an idea of its stupendous civilization, also to describe the awful cataclysm by which, according to Hindu geology, it was destroyed, eleven thousand four hundred years ago.

A. E. S.

ST. ALBANS, VT., 1885.

ATL A.

I.

ATLANTIS.

*"In that fair land
All days were golden, all the months were strings,
On which the master-harper of the world,
The Sun, was ever making harvest songs."*

MIDWAY between the continents of Europe, Africa, and America, where now the ocean rolls its unbroken surges, many thousand years ago there lay a vast island, or continent, called Atlantis. Its shores were high and heavily wooded, and inland was a group of lofty mountains on which the sky seemed to rest; these were volcanoes; and while fire often blazed from their craters, the everlasting snow upon the summits made them the home of refreshing breezes.

In this ancient land were lakes, rivers, meadows, and forests; also populous cities, the grandest of which was imperial Atlan, the home of five hundred thousand inhabitants, the magnetic gem which at once attracted and dispersed a nation's glory.

It was built in the centre of the island, upon a high plain at the foot of Noraghi, the loftiest volcano, and was surrounded by a wall, broad and high, upon which hung ever-verdant gardens. At the base of the wall was a zone of water deep enough to support the heaviest sea-going vessel; from this canal radiated seven ship-roads leading directly to the ocean. Between the canal that surrounded the high plain of Atlan and the open sea were other circumvallations and zones of water passing through other cities, all of which were provided with quays, docks, and every accommodation for an immense home and foreign commerce.

At each intersection of the canals, as also on the rock-bound shore, were massive gates of brass that could be closed in time of storm or invasion, making Atlantis one vast impregnable fortress, while across the streams were bridges of such proportions that an army could march over, or a ship pass under in safety. These encircling water-ways were so admirably arranged that at the pleasure of the gate-keepers vessels of the largest burthen could sweep majestically into the very centre of the island, or lie on its confines powerless to effect a landing; these were the coiled dragon of fable, that guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides; the gates were its hundred mouths. At one place only the sea deeply indented the shore. This was

the bay of Pirhua, a harbor on whose tranquil waters a whole fleet might ride at anchor.

The most wonderful natural feature of Atlantis was a lake, or inland sea, called Ziclan, lying at the foot of the imperial city, embosomed in green and purple hills. The waters of this lake were salt, and subject to the ebb and flow of the tide ; it was therefore supposed to have a subterranean connection with the sea.

Upon this Land of the Blessed a semitropical sun for ever shone ; there reigned perpetual spring ; seed-time and harvest were one ; breezes cool from mountain snows, or warm from ocean currents that laved the shore, with springs both hot and cold, produced a climate favorable to health, longevity, and the perfection of animal and vegetable life. In the rich soil grew grain, fruit, flowers, and trees, such as have never since been seen. Elephants, horses, droves of cattle and sheep, wild beasts, birds of gayest plumage and sweetest note swarmed in meadow, forest, and hill ; there also were seen fish of every kind that sport in stream and fountain, or prowl in ocean deeps. Upon an opal sea the Nautilus launched its rainbow keel and spread its silver sail, while beneath the wave the coral built fairy groves, teeming with life in strange and beautiful forms. Humming-birds flashed through the gardens like

spirits of flowers, and in the dark forests the nightingale wooed his mate, the glow-worm and fire-fly each evening lighted the lantern of love.

In the mountains were quarries of wonderful stone and mines of gems and precious metals, gold, silver, orichaleum, and nephyte—these last unknown save in that favored land.

In such conditions the human race attains its greatest physical perfection, unbroken health develops nervous and muscular energy, while longevity increases the sum of individual power. At the period of which we write a dense population, increasing through ages of prosperity, thronged this nidus of life.

The beautiful city of Atlan, a coronet upon the brow of the island, was the residence of the king and his eldest brother, who filled the office of high-priest, while ten princes of royal blood were subordinate rulers in other cities.

The public edifices in the great metropolis, product of generations of mighty toilers, surpassed anything since reared by human art. In its centre was a grand plateau surrounded by a brazen wall, and within a still loftier terrace, upon which stood a magnificent temple and tower used for astronomical and religious purposes; also an observatory overlooking the island. Upon the verge of the inner terrace, enclosing all, was the Palace of

Hesper, Star of the West, an immense hexagonal building of red and white nephyte, overlaid, as were tower and temple, with silver and gold. The spacious inner court was planted with rare trees, flowering shrubs and trailers, ornamented by arbors, arches, fountains, and statues, and enlivened by the presence of gentle animals and birds. Within the adytum of the temple was a colossal statue of the sea-god, who, it was believed, raised this island from the depths of ocean and founded upon it a kingdom for his ten sons, children of Kleita, a mortal woman. This golden statue was seated in a chariot drawn by six winged horses, and around it were ranged images of the ten demi-gods. Before this group stood a pillar of orichaleum, on which were engraved the laws of the land, and an altar of sacrifice, from which oracles were delivered.

The banks of Lake Ziclan were gorgeous with cool colonnades, vast amphitheatres, race courses, boat-houses, and airy villas, whither the people were wont to resort for public recreation.

For many ages the government of this wonderful empire was just and beneficent, the religion simple and pure, the people happy, but innovation and corruption had changed the conditions of society; arbitrary rule and abuse of privilege had supplanted earlier law, ruler and people loved

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For many ages the government of this wonderful empire was just and beneficent, the religion simple and pure, the people happy, but innovation and corruption had changed the conditions of society; arbitrary rule and abuse of privilege had supplanted earlier law, ruler and people loved

power and pleasure more than justice. The policy of the government had become aggressive; war was not only a pursuit, but a pastime; the Sun-Serpent was worshipped by cruel and obscene rites; the smoke of abominable sacrifices dimmed the serenity of heaven; moral obligation was ignored; and the inevitable consequence of such deterioration became apparent to the thoughtful patriot. A discriminating historian remarks: "The lowering of the moral standard in any community or nation is a sure precursor of convulsion." Political paralysis and national death were imminent in Atlantis, and yet material prosperity was unabated, still patient nature seemed to smile.

Kron, the king, was in the prime of manhood; he represented a dynasty that had ruled for thousands of years; none dared dispute his sway. By successful conquest, many colonies had been formed, which now offered homage and tribute to the central power. Ships laden with the wealth of distant lands waited humbly at the sea-gates; the riches, prestige, and power of the nation exceeded that of any other, and Atlantis exultingly sang:

"I sit on my throne in the sea,
I open the gates of sunset,
I know not fear nor sorrow,
I am Queen of Hesperos,
Garden of the Gods."

II.

N A T A L.

ASTERA, DAUGHTER OF THE STARS.

ON the night of the vernal equinox, the city of Atlan was wild with excitement; the birth of a princess had been announced, the first heir of Kron the Magnificent. The infant was named Astera, Star of the West, and in her honor constellations of fire illuminated every building in the city. Atlan blazed in a glory that might have outshone the lights of heaven and the fiery volcanoes; but neither moon nor star rivalled the artificial glare, for a panoply of storm-clouds filled the sky.

In a gorgeous inner chamber of the palace, Ishma of the East, the court physician, and the midwives watched by the bedside of the queen, while Thalok, the high-priest, performed the customary natal rites in the temple. Throughout the palace all sounds were muffled and all lights subdued, perfume of flowers and burning incense mingled like love whispers in the soft airs that were permitted to stray through the luxurious chamber which welcomed to wealth and homage the royal maiden.

•
III.

A T L A .

GIFT OF THE SEA.

*"Oh night and storm and darkness,
Ye are wondrous strong."*

ON this eventful night, while the newly born princess lay upon a curtained pillow, wrapped in soft slumber, another infant opened its eyes for the first time, under far different auspices.

At Pirhua, the harbor nearest Atlan, the fury of the equinoctial storm was appalling. The wind howled, the rain came down in torrents, and great waves broke heavily against the mole that protected the harbor.

In the watch-tower of the gate stood Karmet and Occuna, warders of the port. The building was constructed upon acoustic principles, so that those within it could catch every sound coming from the sea. As midnight approached the violence of the storm increased ; the noise inside the tower became intolerable.

"Good Occuna," said Karmet, raising his voice to the utmost, "let us go forth, or we shall lose our senses."

Occuna paused, placing his hand behind his ear.

"Listen!" he exclaimed; "sounds other than the roar of the tempest meet my ear. I hear the shriek of human voices. I hear the pounding of a vessel as it dashes against the rocks—the sound is off the bar. A ship has struck!"

The two men rushed to the cliff, straining their eyes in vain endeavor to penetrate the darkness.

At that moment the guard in the light-house, perceiving something unusual in the harbor, turned upon it a powerful reflector, and lo, a vessel of foreign construction lay breaking upon the mole.

Occuna and Karmet were skillful sailors; they speedily procured a life-boat, manned it with their subordinates, and launched forth. Inside the mole the water was comparatively calm, and the oarsmen were making rapid headway, when they suddenly ran across a small boat that had left the sinking ship unperceived in the rush and roar of the mighty surges. The shock was so severe and unexpected that the men in the foreign craft had barely time to lift a female figure into the arms of their dangerous rescuers, when the boat swamped to rise no more.

While the warders held their breath in astonishment at this strange event, a great sea rolled

in making a clean sweep of the bar, carrying away the wreck and tossing the life-boat back to the very landing of the quay. Carefully raising their helpless burden, the sailors conveyed it to a shelter, and there beheld in amazement a woman very fair, with features of almost unearthly beauty. Her golden tresses were banded with a coronet of gems, the drenched garments were of finest wool embroidered in silver. Her high rank was evident, and as she lay with closed eyes, those around were strangely impressed, for she seemed of more than mortal mould.

By means of signals, intelligence of this remarkable adventure was immediately transmitted to the king in Atlan, and early next morning came the flying ship Nagil, with orders to bring the beautiful stranger to the palace, the court physician being in attendance, if his services were required. Vain precaution; the fair-haired queen expired during the night, after giving birth to a daughter.

Oh, blind and cruel fate, that so unequally metes out the lot of helpless mortals! Waited for and welcomed by a proud nation, in the perfumed hush of a palace chamber, Astera, daughter of the stars, was ushered into life, while on the same night, driven by a black tempest out of the raging sea amid the horrors of shipwreck and

death, another infant unnamed and unknown, struggled into existence.

But one solution of this extraordinary event was possible. A ship from some far-off, undiscovered country, disabled and driven south by stress of weather, was wrecked on the Atlantean coast, and all had perished save one frail atom of humanity. The fittest perish, the feeblest survive, when the will of the Law Maker moves upon the face of the waters.

The islanders regarded the whole affair as little less than a miracle, and looked upon the helpless waif with superstitious awe; but Ishma, the court physician, who had been cast upon the island in a similar manner, moved by pity for the homeless stranger, besought permission to adopt her. The king cheerfully assented, named the child *Atla*, Gift of the Sea, bestowed upon her the title of princess, and decreed that she should be brought up at court as the companion of his own daughter.

Thus *Atla*, received into a royal home, became a child to the lonely Ishma, and the recipient of his long smothered affection. He taught her infant lips to fashion the language of the East, and heard with ever fresh delight the sweetness of once familiar words repeated by a northern tongue, for *Atla's* snowy complexion and delicate

flush revealed unmistakably the heritage of wintry skies and cold seas.

The fair exotic, in the bland air of a semi-tropical climate, grew in strength and loveliness. She became tall and graceful; her eyes were violet, her hair was golden, a beauty marvellous and exceptional in this Land of the Sun.

In disposition the princesses were as diverse as in their style of beauty. Astera was impulsive, ardent, passionate; Atla dignified, spiritual, tranquil, by innate authority controlling those around her without designing, or appearing to do so. Both were motherless, for Queen Nyah died during the infancy of her daughter, and both, no doubt, would have been spoiled by admiration and flattery, but for the gentle discipline each exerted upon the other.

As they grew to maturity Atla intuitively chose robes of delicate tint and texture, while Astera's dark bloom, black eyes and hair, were intensified by rich fabrics of crimson and gold.

Nothing could be more attractive than the contrasting charms and sisterly fondness of these incomparable maidens, and passers-by would involuntarily linger to gaze upon the harmonies of Astera and Atla, the Ruby and the Pearl.

IV.

THE FLOATING GARDEN.

*"On an ethereal lake whose waters lie
Blue and transpicuous like another sky."*

IN this Eden of the West, nothing that the genius of man could invent to please the sense, or gratify national pride, seemed wanting. Architectural monuments, sculptured pillars, triumphal arches, temples, towers and palaces abounded. Landscape gardens, orchards, fountains, and vast theatres for open-air amusements, had long since exhausted the ingenuity of architects. Yet the king demanded that some grand and novel memorial should be built to commemorate the birth of his daughter and heir; for, in failure of male issue, the royal prerogative was transmitted directly through the female line.

As months passed away and no satisfactory suggestions were made by the skilled designers, King Kron became impatient, and Ishma, the physician, ventured to address him upon the subject.

"Oh, mighty Kron," said Ishma, "the God of my fathers giveth wisdom to his worshippers through visions of the night. Even when I was

wrapt in deep slumber, the thought of the king's perplexity troubled my dreams. Then suddenly my soul was thrilled with wonder and delight, for a marvellous vision appeared before the eyes of my spirit. I saw upon the lake named Ziclan, which lies to the westward of this city, a sight of ravishing beauty, the like of which, I verily believe, has never yet existed. It was an island, in shape circular. Upon it grew all manner of trees and flowering plants, and in the centre thereof rose a fair tower, inlaid with gold and painted tablets glittering in the sun, and from the windows and balconies were silken banners suspended by cords.

“Directly above the island, for night seemed suddenly to have fallen, in the soft twilight heaven hung the crescent moon, and in her arms a brilliant star. The island was round, like the full moon; above it was a star, and in my sleep I murmured ‘Aster!’ As I gazed, wondering what the vision might mean, a breeze came in from the sea, the waters of the lake were tossed into small waves, the trees upon the island bent low, the banners swelled out like the sails of a ship, and then, oh, king, a miracle appeared. The island rocked like a vessel in harbor, it moved forward and floated over the bosom of the lake, till it touched the farther shore.”

At this relation the king was mute with astonishment; but when he recovered speech, he said :

“Ishma, this is indeed a wonder. Canst thou interpret the dream?”

And Ishma answered: “Thus are the wise men and master-builders instructed. Shall not that miracle of beauty, till now unknown even in Atlantis, become a memorial of the princess Astera’s birth, a floating garden on Lake Ziclan, as yet seen only in visions of the night?”

“And the moon with the star in her arms?”

“Oh, king, of this I know not the meaning, it is for the present hidden; but I am well assured that the fate of the king’s daughter is involved in the building of this island.”

“Ishma,” said the king, “I give thee my command with full power for its construction; if thou verify the dream, wealth and honor shall be thy reward. The heart of Kron is at rest.”

The royal decree went forth that an unlimited supply of material, machinery and skilled workmen should be placed at Ishma’s disposal, and labor upon the novel structure was begun immediately.

An immense net-work of woven sea-rods, pliable and strong as steel, formed a living, growing foundation for the superincumbent mass. Upon

this huge wattle, now anchored to the shore, earth was carefully spread and filled with fibrous roots of aquatic plants. After they had become thoroughly impacted, the soil was made deep enough for shrubs and trees. These were left undisturbed for several years, and when the foundation was pronounced by the architects safe and firm, a tower of dream-like beauty, built of cork and painted to resemble stone, was erected among groves and gardens of supernal luxuriance.

Finally stays of timber were placed beneath the island to strengthen it, and when all was perfect, silken sails were suspended from roof and balcony, and on the pinnacle of the tower glittered a silver moon with a star in its arms. The Atlantean world thronged to behold the trial of its sailing qualities, which proved to be perfect: and thus was the dream of Ishma made a reality.

Before this marvel of architecture was completed many years had passed; Astera and her companion had attained maturity, and notable events had transpired. The king was still without a consort, and it was more than suspected that the beautiful Atla was destined to fill the vacancy on the throne. An arrow from the bright eyes of Astera had pierced the heart of her cousin Zemar, son of the high-priest, while deadly passions and desperate plans were secretly cherished

in the breast of Thalok, his father. This unscrupulous man had long since discovered whither the eyes of the king and Zemar turned, and his schemes were vaguely forming. Kron, the reigning monarch, Astera, his immediate successor, and Zemar her lover, were bars in the pathway of his ambition. If these obstacles were removed, Thalok would be king of Atlantis, and Atla, of whom he was deeply enamored, could grace his throne.

The seasons came and went, and made no sign; youth and maiden increased in years and beauty; the king planned measures for the aggrandizement of national glory, and particularly busied himself in perfecting a colony founded on the coast of a great continent lying to the west. The high-priest schemed and plotted, yet during all these years, though "the heavens maintained their terrible composure," nature was secretly marshalling her mighty forces, and in a far-off country there was preparing a new factor in coming events; a network of fate was weaving, undreamed of by sage or prophet.

V.

TYRHENA.

THE SONS OF NIMROD, THE MIGHTY.

THOUSANDS of miles to the east of Atlantis, on the shores of the Sea Cham, now called Mediterranean, lay the walled city Cacara, a place of great commercial importance, in that far-off, forgotten time. An unceasing tide of human activity streamed through its paved streets; caravans, laden with merchandise stretched away into the desert; the port was alive with water-craft of every description; the quays were crowded with men busily employed among the wares of commerce.

Along the shore rose tall chimneys, from which black smoke drifted like plumes. Here were the largest manufactories and metallurgic works in the world, where were produced molten images, ornaments, implements of peace and war, rich dyes and fabrics.

But beyond all this, Cacara was celebrated for the manufacture of glass amphora and lustre drops, or beads, lozenge-shaped and polished like

sapphires; the secret of their manufacture was confined to the Phenicians, who used these gems as coin in mercantile transactions.

Upon the walls of the city were watch-towers and astronomical observatories, and, according to the custom of Sabeans or star worshippers, in a grove upon a high place east of the city, stood a temple dedicated to Ashteroth, Queen of Heaven. Near by were the Magian towers and the royal residence, built of massive stone and roofed with cedar.

Kirgath Melek, reigning monarch at the time of which we write, was a wise ruler and a man of affairs, who gathered into his service the learned and skillful of all nations.

But the pride of court and people was his son and heir, the young prince Herekla, now eighteen years of age, already tall and grand, for he inherited the physical traits of his primogenitors, the famous Annakim. His features and form of matchless perfection were transfused by a wonderful sweetness of expression, never seen at the present day save in old Phenician statuary.

Beneath this peculiar charm and dignity, unusual at any age, the face of Herekla wore a look of profound thought and self-repression, while his changeful color and dark glowing eyes flashed denial to the intellectual repose of his coun-

tenance. His presence was of the rare type that imposes respect, almost awe, even in childhood.

His mother, Queen Nansyka, a woman of many virtues, had greatly influenced his character. She taught him to shun the women's apartments, where the handsome boy would have been spoiled by flattery, but encouraged him to cultivate the acquaintance and friendship of the elders and wise men, among whom were two persons especially entitled to confidence—Madai, a Persian Magus, and Kadmon, a Hindu Arhat, deeply imbued with the philosophy of his native land, and of great repute among Chaldean priests as an astrologer.

At his mother's suggestion Herekla chose these wise men for his instructors, and at night would repair with them to the observatories, there to study the sacred cypher, read the stars and watch the combinations of the planets. Thus he acquired the lore of sages and even supplemented their wisdom by his quick insight. From these adepts in Oriental philosophy he learned the profound virtues of self-repression and self-abnegation, and in their practice obtained control of those with whom he was associated, no less than of his own spirit.

His days were spent in the laboratory inspecting the charts of sailors and models of ships; himself planned and projected sea-going vessels and

voyages; assisted by skilled artisans he also experimented in fusing metals and earths, and in perfecting fabrics and dyes.

During leisure hours he practiced with sword and lance, managed all kinds of water craft, was a powerful swimmer and successful hunter, but most of all athletic pursuits he delighted in the subjection and management of spirited horses.

To gratify this predominant taste, his father procured from the deserts of Joktan two wonderful steeds, Zuzin and Zummin. Black in color they were, dappled like the dawn and fleet as the wind, the admiration of all who beheld them. These fiery animals brooked not the restraint of bit and bridle, neither could they be persuaded to draw the heavy chariots of the king. Being declared utterly unmanageable, Melek was about to return them to their desert home, when Marchar, a merchant from the land of the Tsinim, begged an audience.

"Most noble Melek," he said, prostrating himself, "although the children of Tsin are as the dust of the balance before thee, bear with me patiently while I declare that there are, in the land of my fathers, chariots of the sun, before which even the intractable Zuzin and Zummin will be meek as the oxen that tread out the corn; neither will charioteer or groom be required, for

the chariot is enchanted, and guideth both itself and the steeds."

"Son of Yu," answered Melek, "if it be as thou sayst, go to thy country, purchase for me at any price a Chariot of the Sun, bring it to Tyrhena, and great shall be thy recompense. But if thou deceive the king, thou knowest the law."

"Upon my life be it," said the merchant, and departed.

After many months had passed a caravan arrived from the East and with it were Marchar and the chariot. King and noble assembled in the court of the palace to witness a trial of its power. The horses, loosened from their stalls, rushed out with such strength and ferocity that the utmost efforts of four Nubian giants scarcely restrained them. When they entered the court, excited by the presence and number of the crowd, they reared and plunged frightfully, their eyeballs rolled in frenzy, their neighing was like the roar of wild beasts; they seemed possessed by demons.

The dismayed courtiers begged the king to retire, but he ordered the assistance of other grooms, and after a furious struggle the steeds were forced within the traces of iron.

Marchar watched his opportunity, and at a propitious moment adroitly threw a chain of fine wrought steel over the head of each horse, slipped

a bit of the same metal between the teeth, and clasped thereon another chain depending from the pole of the chariot.

Then stepping back, he cried: "Remove the bridles and release the steeds!"

The grooms reluctantly obeyed, springing aside in terror, but a hush of astonishment held them and every spectator spellbound. The horses, finding themselves at liberty, made a desperate plunge as if they would go forward, but stopped short trembling, their eyes closed, their heads drooped, their knees bent, they seemed about to lie down.

"Who will enter the chariot?" cried Marchar. "Who will venture?"

All were silent save the young prince, who, with heightened color and flashing eyes, stepped forward and said:

"Instruct me, merchant of Tsin, and I will essay the task."

"Thou art brave, oh, Herekla," responded Marchar; "thy courage is the promise of success. First caress each horse, call him gently by name, but touch not bit or bridle."

Herekla went forward without fear, patted the sides of the trembling steeds, stroked each face and neck, calling them by name, till they became reassured, and bent affectionately toward him.

When they were accustomed to his voice and touch, Marchar said :

“ Now take thy place in the chariot ; the horses will go through the gate to the south, ever keeping the same direction. When thou wouldst guide them otherwise, press the lever in front of the chariot to right or left, as is desired. Go forth fearlessly ; no harm can befall thee, the horses are enchanted.”

Then Herekla, taking his place, cried out : “ Zuzin, Zummin. Away, away ! ”

The horses, cheered by the voice, and feeling some impulse that urged them forward, sprang through the gate, taking a course due south, while king and courtier, rapt in astonishment, watched them move swiftly but steadily forward, until they were lost to sight on the distant plain.

Toward evening Herekla returned, bringing in the horses perfectly tractable, but as fresh as when they left the court. Gracefully acknowledging the shouts of welcome, he drove directly to the stables, released and fed the horses with his own hand, caressed them, called them by name and retired.

From that hour the fiery steeds of the desert accepted the young prince as their master ; they knew his kind voice and touch, they left their stalls at his summons, and every day the superb equipage of the royal charioteer might be seen swiftly scouring the southern plains.

VI.

STORY OF DEDAN THE PILOT.

"THE TOILERS OF THE SEA."

ONE summer morning, not long subsequent to the events just related, King Melek entered the council-chamber in the Hall of Audience and took his place upon the ivory throne. His son, the Prince Herekla, stood by his side, and around were ranged the councillors and Magi. Their faces wore a troubled expression, for they had been summoned to deliberate upon matters deeply affecting the welfare of the nation.

After a brief silence, the king thus addressed the assembly: "Again have the ships of Tsin out-voyaged those of Phenicia, and have entered a dangerous harbor while ours were wrecked in the attempt to follow; one man alone remains alive to tell the story."

Then turning to an attendant, he added: "Call in Dedan the Pilot, who arrived yesternight with the Erythean caravan."

Presently there entered a man, travel-worn and

sad of countenance, who, after prostrating himself at the feet of the king, rose and related his misadventures.

“Oh king, live for ever,” said Dedan the Pilot. “Six months ago, thy ship, the Whale, was returning from the land of Ophir, laden with gold, ivory, apes, and peacocks; for by the goodness of Baal, giver of fortune, the voyage had prospered. We came in sight of a strange land, and upon the shores were many sunken rocks, round which the sea boiled like a pot. While sailing along this coast, we saw in advance of our ship a vessel of the Tsinim, floating like a log upon the water. Even as our sailors were still deriding this clumsy craft, it passed between the rocks, steering skillfully, and landed near a city where a river entered the sea. Our voyage had been long; we were straitened for food and water, and seeing the good fortune of these men, a murmur of discontent arose among the crew.

“‘Shall the children of Gog,’ they cry, ‘eat of the fresh fruits and drink of the pure springs, while the sons of Cush perish with hunger and thirst?’

“And they stood and cursed.

“Then said the master of the ship: ‘Be it on your heads.’ He commanded me, and the helm being put about, we followed. But as we came

near to land, some god of Tsin caused a mist to rise over the water, and having no object whereby to steer, we fell upon the rocks; the ship was broken up, and all thy servants, with the treasure, were plunged in the deep and perished.

“But it so chanced that the helm, to which I clung when it parted, caught on a rock and stuck fast, where I lay, knowing naught till the ships of Tsin returned, and seeing a man in that plight, sent a boat to fetch me, more dead than alive. Some of the sailors would throw me back into the sea, but the more merciful said, ‘Leave him on the deck; perchance his life may come to him again.’

“So they left me till the going down of the sun, and my spirit returned, but I made no sign, for in my heart I said, ‘If the lord Baal prosper me, in the night I will creep forth and discover the god that guides the ship in mist and darkness,’ for as we departed from the coast I had seen the pilot look often into a box near the helm.

“Night fell upon the sea; the moon and the Lady Ashteroth walked in the pathway of heaven; the wind was light, the water calm; and the pilot, seeing there was no danger, fell asleep. Then I arose stealthily, and creeping to the box, looked therein.”

The pilot paused, and the king inquired anxiously, “What sawest thou, Dedan?”

“I saw, oh king, a bowl of earthenware, such as are sold by the merchants of Tsin, and upon the inside thereof were graven lines marking the four corners of the earth, and around were pictures of the host of heaven and other curious figures that I did not understand. The cup was filled with water and in its midst a float of cork, and lying upon it was a needle of iron like those used by women in broidery. When the ship turned, even if it were completely put about, the needle and the float that sustained it whirled away and remained always pointing to the south. It was like a living creature, yet it stirred not at the approach of my finger. By this I perceived that it had been enchanted and was the slave of some spirit or god. Then I trembled with fear and crept silently away, and lay upon the deck till morning, and no one was aware of what I had seen.

“After I had eaten and recovered strength, I wrought with the men, and they treated me kindly. The pilot often consulted the spirit in the box, and the ship swerved not from its course, and the voyage prospered till we arrived at the entrance of the Erythean Sea, and I, unwelcome messenger that I am, hastened to Cacara, to lay my misfortunes at the feet of the king. Thy ship and the sailors lie on that accursed shore, and I alone am left to tell the story.”

Then Dedan fell to the ground in the violence of grief, but the king spake comfortably, and said : " Fear not, oh Dedan ; thou hast done well ; perchance this loss may be for our greater advantage. Go in peace ; nevertheless, speak not to any concerning this matter."

As Dedan retired, the king sighed heavily, and said : " Oh, that one could make known to us the spirit that enchants the needle of iron, then should Phenicia be ruler of the sea, and her merchants become rich above all others, for verily our ships and our sailors are better than those of the Tsinim."

VII.

HEREKLA, DISCOVERER AND INVENTOR.

AT these words, the young prince rose, and making obeisance to his father, left the Chamber of Council, and descended to that part of the city where the smoke and glare of the furnaces gave token that the smiths wrought the hot metals. He entered the largest of the factories and, calling to the overseer, said, "I pray you, master smith, make for me a staff pointed with steel, wherewith I can climb the mountain; and make also a needle of iron well tempered, such as is used by women in broidery. These keep safely till I call for them."

After Herekla had given these orders, he went forth in his chariot, as was his custom, driving the steeds of Joktan, and as he journeyed he mused:

"An enchanted needle, an enchanted chariot; one guideth a ship, the other controlleth furious horses; both are from the land of the Tsinim. The needle is of iron, and it lieth along a float of wood—so said Dedan—and along the wood of the chariot

is not iron everywhere placed? Have not mine eyes often observed this and as often I wondered thereat? and doth not the chain of steel that encircles the heads of my steeds and the iron that curbs them, attach to that of the chariot? Each day the horses grow stronger, and yet each day my power over them increaseth.

"Surely this is a mystery, and yet through the mists I dimly perceive a law defined, a fact attainable. Oh, that I could grasp it and aid my father and glorify my countrymen.

"To-morrow I will sacrifice to my god, even to Melkarth Herekles, for whom I am named, the pure god my mother worships. Perchance he will aid my earnest endeavor."

The next day Herekla went from the palace alone, for he was greatly beloved and discreet, so that his father, having no fear for his safety, encouraged in him a daring spirit. He took the staff and needle that the smith had made, and climbed the mountain, where was an altar in honor of Melkarth, the achiever of mighty deeds, the god of blooming youth.

The young prince abhorred the bloody and foul rites of Baal, Ashtoreth, and Moloch, even as he loved the ideal of strength and purity represented by his mother's god.

Before the altar he now bowed, offering flowers

and fruit gathered on the way, and calling upon the deity: "Oh, friend of man, for the honor of my father's kingdom and the good of his people, reveal to thy servant the spirit that controls the steeds and guides the ship." This he repeated many times, giving his soul to prayer.

At length, resting his staff upon a rock that overlooked the city, he sat down and remained a long time in earnest meditation. The ordinary pleasures of childhood and youth had little fascination for this remarkable young prince; he was more happy in the council-chamber, the Magian tower, at the crucible of the alchemist, or the forge of the artisan, than in the halls of mirth and feasting. Knowing that if he outlived his father he would one day be king, his mind was filled with schemes for the aggrandizement of the nation and welfare of the people.

And now he sighed: "Would that I might solve this mystery and become a blessing to the nation, for verily our people are given to traffic and not to war. Our sailors could thus explore the four quarters of the world, and its treasures would be poured into our bosom."

Absorbed in these thoughts, the hours passed unheeded; he grew drowsy from inaction and the warmth of the sun, and, leaning back against the rock, fell asleep and dreamed. And lo! the sun-

god presents him a cup of gold and an arrow of steel ; with these in his hand, he crosses the deep, until he reaches a land in the far west, where a dreadful storm is raging. In the darkness and danger floats a human form, luminous like a spirit ; he struggles to reach and rescue it, but wakes with a start, to find the day past and the sun setting.

He rose quickly and prepared to descend the mountain, but in taking up the staff, felt it slightly adhere to the rock. Again and again he replaced it, and each time perceived the same dragging sensation. Upon closer examination he saw particles of sand and small pebbles whirl after and attach themselves to the point.

At this he smiled, and said : " The staff is certainly bewitched ; " but instantly, as another thought flashed through his mind, he trembled and sank upon the earth, saying : " This is Bætylia, a rock that hath life. Is it not the spirit that controls the ship and the chariot ? "

Moved by some sudden intuition, he drew forth the needle he had brought, and, applying it to the point of the staff, saw it stir in his hand and cling to the steel. Overcome with emotion, he fell down before the altar, saying : " Oh, Melkarth, thou hast unveiled the mystery ; I am thy servant forever. "

The sun's broad disk now dipped in the sea,

and, clasping his treasure firmly, Herekla descended to the valley.

He felt confident that he had discovered a peculiar power possible to iron after contact with certain earths or rocks ; but how should he apply this knowledge to the construction of a compass ? He confided his perplexity to no one, for reticence was a strong characteristic of his nature ; but he summoned Dedan, and, after obtaining from him a more detailed description of the instrument used by the foreign sailors, he retired to the solitude of his laboratory and wrought assiduously to reproduce it. After many days of patient toil and many discouraging failures, he at last perfected his invention. The cumbersome float and cup of water were discarded, the needle was suspended upon a delicate pivot, the balance was perfect, and to Herekla's great joy he found that it always pointed to the north. This peculiarity he accepted as a fact, although the cause he could not fathom. Wherever he went, walking or driving, the magnetic needle was his companion, and by a certain tremulousness he detected a sympathy between it and the self-directing chariot.

VIII.

THE BREATH OF A STONE.

THE council again assembled. A great ship was ready for sea ; its destination must be determined. The wise men urged that it be sent to the country of the Tsinim, where, by purchase or force, their mysterious power over iron might be learned. The king approved the plan, and a decision was imminent when the young prince modestly asked permission to speak.

“ Oh, my father, and ye nobles of Cacara, let not anxious thoughts trouble you ; neither waste the months in journeying to seek that which lieth at your own door.

“ Behold the arrow of Baal transfixed in a heart of iron and brought to earth by the hand of Melkarth, the victorious.”

Throwing open the box, he exclaimed : “ I present for your acceptance, the breath of a stone, the spirit of a rock, even that which controls the chariots and ships of the Tsinim.”

Greatly astonished, King Melek replied : “ How can the course of any be guided by this cup ?

Prove thy words, my son, and thou shalt be accounted wisest among men."

Then answered Herekla : "Bandage mine eyes so that I can see nought but the cup in my hand, turn me around many times until all memory of my position is lost, lead me forth from this chamber, and I will pursue the pathways of the court, as thou shalt direct."

They did according to this plan, and unerringly he crossed the court and walked through grove and garden with eyes close covered, seeing only the cup in his hand. In other ways they tested his ability, and at last the most incredulous were convinced, saying : "The benevolent Melkarth, the friend of youth, hath inspired him ; our shipmasters shall waste no time voyaging to the land of Tsin."

The council decreed, that to honor Herekla for this wonderful discovery, he should be made commander of the ports, that he should hold a signet of power, and the captains should do his bidding.

Being invested with authority, he went to the harbor where the new ship lay, named it the Whale, after that which was lost, appointed Dedan to be the master, gave him the cup of Herekles, instructed him in its use, and issued these orders :

"Sail ever to the west ; steer by the cup of Melkarth ; follow the track of the sun and the stars ;

look often to that small star low in the north that has no track; it neither rises nor sets and changes not; mayhap it will help thee in time of trouble. Yet neglect not to take in thy ship the customary basket of pigeons; the power of these birds to discern land is wonderful; they may be of service if the cup should be broken or fail.

“Sail ever to the west; stay only to replenish the stores of the ship; pass every island, double every cape, dare every sea, make charts of the same to aid thee on thy return. At last, perchance thou wilt come to some unknown land, and if the people of that country are friendly, make a treaty of amity, trade with them, interchange commodities, make them presents, and, after thou hast disposed of thy cargo, which is of the abundance of Phenicia, return by the way thou camest, trading and dealing honorably by all thou shalt meet on the way, steering ever east by the cup of Melkarth till thou shall reach this harbor in peace.”

Dedan and the sailors applauded the words of the prince, and swore by the gods that control the sun, the moon, and the five planets, that they would keep sacred the commands of Herekla. Then the sails were unfurled, the heavy oars struck the water, the Whale swung from its moorings, and, amid the cheers of the multitude that

stood upon the shore, it steadily moved out of the harbor, freighted with the treasures of the East.

While king and courtier went in state to offer sacrifices of blood in the temples of Baal and Ash-teroth, Herekla repaired alone to the hill where his discovery was made, and watched the white sails till night fell upon the earth, and the westering ship disappeared in the darkness.

IX.

THE ASTROLOGERS.

“GO UP AND READ THE STARS.”

Two years passed, and in a climate where the energies of nature are most active, Herekla attained maturity. By wise preferences in training he had become a true son of Anak, agile and hardy; his form developed into the perfection of manly strength and beauty. Yet he was still simple and severe in habit, grave and quiet in manner, tranquil and serene in disposition, though the rich color that mounted to his dark cheek and the flash of his piercing eye gave token of a smothered fire that might at any moment burst into a conflagration. But fuel there seemed none, soft sentiments were merged in stern pursuits, his eyes wandered not towards the ladies of the court, and the king grew anxious, lest his son should never wed.

Upon Herekla's twentieth birthday Melek summoned his wise men and astrologers, to take their advice concerning the welfare of the young prince.

After various plans had been proposed, and the council could come to no agreement, Kadmon the Hindu, teacher and friend of Herekla, rose and thus addressed the king :

“ Oh, sovereign lord, since thou hast honored me by a place at thy court, and, by the secrets of our high Order, hast admitted me to thy confidence, I have carefully observed the life of our young master, and by methods known only to the descendants of Charmos, father of the Chaldeans, and by the Magi of that nation communicated to me, I have cast his horoscope.” Profound silence fell upon the assembly as Kadmon continued : “ Oh, king, listen to the voice of the stars ! Thy son shall excel in power and might all who have gone before him ; yet a great disaster threatens. Before Baal, the sun god, shall twice fill the baskets of the vintage, strange and portentous signs shall appear in heaven. The sun and moon shall be darkened at midday, and Mazzaroth shall blaze forth in splendor from the western sky. To Herekla this is the hour of fate, for, as thou well knowest, Mazzaroth is the star of his nativity. But whether good or ill portend, I swear, by the majesty of the Unnameable One, I know not. The place of the vision was strange, the land heaved like the surges of Cham, darkness fell

upon mine eyes, and mine ears were stunned by the roar of mighty waters."

Kadmon paused, the assembled councillors were silent, and the heart of the king was troubled.

At length Persep, youngest of the Magi, spoke thus:

"Let not my lord, the king, be dismayed. The vision of Kadmon was of a foreign land. At home, in Cacara, our beloved prince will no doubt be in safety. Therefore, for two years, the time of the vision, do thou surround him with all delights and suffer him not to depart from his own country until the danger is past."

To this plan the council agreed, and it was so determined.

While the wise men were thus deciding his future, Herekla sat alone in a tower upon the hill Melkarth, overlooking the sea. The ship, two years ago, confided to the care of Dedan the Pilot, had not returned, nor yet sent tidings, and fears of disaster oppressed both king and subject, for many a man had friend and fortune in that venture. To Herekla its success was of supreme importance, involving, as it did, the practical utility of his discovery and invention.

He had recently contrived a lens which caused

distant objects to seem near. By its power he could distinguish every movement of the sailors in the harbor below, and could even read the hieroglyphs painted upon the vessels. Now long and earnestly, as he had often done before, he swept the vacant line where sea and sky are mingled. He almost ceased to hope; but, lo! a white speck dots the horizon—it increases in size; a vessel is surely approaching.

For hours the young prince keeps watch, till at length the outline is discernible through the glass, and he recognizes the form of the long absent ship.

His heart beats high, the blood rushes through his veins as he swiftly descends to the city, and carries the joyful intelligence to king and court. The excitement and tumult were unbounded. Everybody hurried to the wharves, where now the colors of the vessel were clearly to be seen. Soon the Whale was safely moored, and Dedan and his comrades received the embrace of their friends.

The unlading took place immediately, and great was the wonder as many unfamiliar objects were landed upon the quays; strange birds and beasts, fruits, fabrics and plants before unknown, even in the abundant marts of these merchants of the world.

The night was given to feasting and mirth, but Herekla, anxious to learn the particulars of the voyage, after the ship-master was refreshed, hastened to the audience chamber of the king, where Dedan related this marvellous story.

X.

THE LOTUS LAND.

*“Soft are the skies of the lotus land,
White is the surf that laves the strand,
Tall are the waving lotus palms,
Dark is the shade of their outstretched arms.
Dreamy the life of the mystic band,
Steeping each sense in perfume bland,
Floating through vapors rainbow spanned,
They live and walk in a trance like sleep ;
They hear strange voices call from the deep,
And though the sun sinks in the west,
They turn not to a place of rest,
But softly sing in the dark’ning air,
‘Though other lands of earth are fair,
Forever and forever more,
We will dream on the lotus shore.’”*

“Он, king,” said Dedan, “as thy soul liveth, our adventures have been wonderful and our dangers great, but the power of Melkarth and his enchanted cup prevailed.

“After leaving the port of Cacara, we passed the countries and islands where we are wont to trade, and when we had sailed west for many days through the sea of Cham, we came to a strait, where was a fierce conflict between the wind and

the sea. We were driven about by the inconstancy of the elements that contend in this place, until, for want of water, we were forced to land. On one side was a mountainous shore, and on the other a frowning rock of great height. We were nearly wrecked, but after much tossing fell into calm water under the shadow of the rock, and the sails hung idle, though the wind still howled in the sky. We climbed the height, and lo! to the west was an ocean, gray and misty, with surges a league in length heaving against the sky.

“The waters of the sea of Cham are blue, and comparatively quiet, but in these straits they were tumultuous, for the great ocean ever poured itself into the sea, and the wind was contrary.

“At this fearful sight the sailors cried out: ‘It is the sea Muhit,’ for they knew not what to say.

“Then they murmured: ‘The gods forbid that we should enter this dangerous ocean; no vessel can withstand its might, even though it escape being dashed upon the rocks.’

“But remembering the orders of my lord Herekla: ‘Sail ever to the west,’ when all were asleep I surveyed the harbor from the height, and determined by the needle in which way I could pass out to sea. I then called Karmos the Steadfast, and the best sailors, and together we weighed anchor, loosened sail and dashed into the strait.

The conflict was terrible, but the wind prevailed, and by dawn we were far out at sea. The crew yielded to fate, and after four days' sailing we sighted an island.

"The shores were high, and dense with verdure; snow-capped volcanoes rose majestically against the sky, fair cities dotted the slopes, and orange groves like cloud shadows darkened the plains.

"As we drew near, double-prowed boats came out to meet us. They were manned by sailors grand in form and dark in visage. They spoke a diverse language, but when by gesture we signified that our mission was one of peace, they brought us into harbor and ministered to our wants.

"Next day ambassadors came from the king of that land, one of whom was a venerable man, Ishma by name, whose features marked him a son of Shem. To our joy he addressed us in the Phenician language, saying that he was born in Tyrhena, though brought up in Egypt, and taught the science of the priesthood. Many years ago he crossed the great desert that lies to the west of Egypt with a caravan sent out to explore the country beyond. The camels and many of the men died, and the remnant, being unable to return, constructed a rough boat and launched upon a sea which they had discovered, hoping thereby

to reach Egypt again. But a storm overtook them, and after much suffering they were rescued by strange sailors and brought to this country, Atlantis it is called, where the king received Ishma with great favor, and after he had acquired the language, made him the royal physician. We told him our story, and he kindly offered his aid.

“We were then conveyed through a grand canal to the royal city Atlan. The country is very populous, the inhabitants are darker than we, their foreheads are high and retreating, which gives them a lordly look; their eyes are black, their features regular, but expressive of unrest.

“These people are great warriors, and have conquered many lands; they are ever busy, and their works are mighty, so that we were dumb through astonishment. The streams caused by melting of snows on the volcanoes are gathered into tanks and brought to the cities in aqueducts. These streams not only supply the people with pure water, but irrigate the heated plains, and at night turn great wheels that flood the streets of hewn stone and carry all impurity through the canals into the sea.

“On our way to the city we passed a beautiful salt lake called Ziclan, lying among wooded mountains; on its bosom drifted pleasure boats of fanciful shape. But the most wonderful object on this

inland sea is an artificial island, or Floating Garden, built to commemorate the birth of the Princess Astera, only child of the king and heir to all his grandeur. This Floating Island is green with trees and vines, and gorgeous with flowers, amid which nestles a tower of exceeding beauty, gay with banners and silken sails.

“In the city are hanging gardens, towers, palaces and temples, which exceed those of Chaldea; the carved and molten images are more wonderful than those of Egypt; the paintings and tapestries outvie those of Tyrhena; the tower of Kohl is greater than that of Belus; in its grand adytum is a colossal image of the sea god, a pillar of nephyte, and an altar where sacrifices are offered and oracles given once a year.

“In this temple we were received by the king, whose name is Kron. He is a tall, grand man, who wears his crown and carries his sceptre right royally. We bowed to the earth before him, and when, by the interpretation of Ishma, we were commanded to rise, we presented the gifts and message of our sovereign lord, Melek Kirgath of the East, who desired to make a treaty of friendship with the ruler of this land, and to ask his most gracious favor.

“The king approved our suit, and inquired many things concerning my lord Melek and his country.

He gave command that we should receive the courtesy due to ambassadors and be nourished at the palace till our return.

“After we were dismissed, Ishma instructed us in the laws and customs of the land, and warned us in no way to violate them. He further informed us that Kron, the king, is a beneficent ruler and mindful of the good of his subjects; but bade us beware of Thalok, the high-priest of the Sun-Serpent, a foul and cruel deity, worshipped by many of the people. Though the laws were originally well observed, through the machinations of this wicked and powerful man, innovations have crept in, abominable rites are practiced, crime and iniquity are legalized under cover of the sacerdotal office. These practices are abhorred by Ishma, who worships the God of his father Shem.

“I had left the royal presence rejoicing at my good fortune in finding a countryman and in being permitted to see this unknown land. I hoped, after examining its wonders and concluding a treaty with the king, to bring our vessel speedily homeward and lay much treasure at the feet of my lord. But soon a soft languor crept over me, a dreamy forgetfulness took possession of my soul. I cared no longer to traffic or even observe the strange sights around me. I went no more to the harbor where my ship was lying, I had no mem-

ory of friends or country, but I longed for the fruits around me, and would abide in that land forever. None save my comrades observed this change, until one day Ishma, the physician, came to me with a message.

“ ‘Oh, Dedan,’ he said, ‘I bring you good tidings. Kron the Magnificent gives thee his favor and grants an audience, for he is about to return thee to thy country with gifts and tokens for thy master.’

“ But I answered vaguely, ‘Oh, my friend, what words are these? Who is my master but King Kron? And what home have I save this island?’ and I looked in his eyes wistfully, striving to gather his meaning.

“ Then was Ishma affrighted and said sharply, ‘Hast thou taken aught for food beside the king’s portion?’

“ I answered, ‘As my soul liveth, I have taken nought save delectable fruit and the tender buds of flowers that grow in the gardens of Kohl; pleasant to the eye are they, and desirable for food.’

“ Then said Ishma in dismay, ‘Oh, rash and unfortunate one, did I not warn thee to beware of the wiles of Thalok, the priest? He is suspicious and malign; he fears that the influence of foreigners may in some manner conflict with his own, there-

fore he scruples not at desperate means to gain control over them. He wills that thou shouldst die in this land. Oh, Dedan, through his craftiness thou hast partaken of the flowers of forgetfulness that grow in the valley of dreams, and of the fruit that causeth all memory of friends to perish and benumbs the heart so that it throbs with affection no longer. I know not if it be too late for thy restoration. Come quickly to my chamber; perchance remedies may yet avail.'

" 'God of my father Shem,' he devoutly prayed, 'enlighten his mind; let not this error be fatal!'

"I was devoid of will or purpose, and passively followed the physician as he hurried me to an inner chamber of the palace, where he had in store diverse strange jars and bottles. From one of these he dropped medicine into a cup and offered it to me.

" 'Nay, nay,' I said, 'I do not require thy remedies. My heart beats slowly and my head is heavy, but indeed I am not ill.'

"But Ishma in great anxiety urged me forcibly, saying, 'Take these drops, lie down upon my bed. Thou must sleep, if so be God will grant thee slumber.'

"So I swallowed the bitter draught and fell heavily upon the couch, but, although the place was dark and noiseless, I did not sleep, and now

remembered with stupid wonder that for many days and nights I had not sought my bed, but had wandered through the gardens as in a dream.

“In this chamber I lay a long time like one dead, only that mine eyes were unclosed; my soul longed for the accustomed food, but my limbs were powerless to move and procure it.

“Ishma visited me constantly, dispensing simple fare and repeating the bitter drops. At length I passed into unconsciousness. I spoke not, I roused not, I dreamed not. After many days, I hungered, and with eyes still closed, thinking I was at home and that my wife was near, I said, ‘Zara, my beloved, bring water, for I thirst, and bread, for verily I hunger.’

“Then one spake my name, and looking up, I saw Ishma standing by the bed. ‘Oh, Dedan,’ he said, and the tears were in his eyes, ‘God is merciful; thou hast spoken the name of thy wife; memory has returned, thou art saved.’ He had mentioned my case to none, and no doubt the high-priest thought me more crafty than himself, and that I had not been tempted by appetite.

“From that hour strength and reason were restored. I came before the king, and through the interpretation of Ishma answered many questions concerning the kingdom of my lord Melek, of his power and majesty, of his laws and people.

“After speaking of many matters, the king said, ‘Hath thy master a son?’ I answered, ‘Yea, my lord, he has one son only.’ ‘Tell me of his age and person and qualities.’

“Then I gladly told him of the young Prince Herekla now attaining manhood, in beauty and wisdom, excelling all others; of his skill in manly pursuits, and of his wonderful inventions. I spoke also of the prophecies of his might and power, in which he would exceed all who had reigned before him, that he would live long and prosper, for Mazzaroth the Potent is the star of his nativity.

“After I ceased speaking, there was a long silence. Then Kron earnestly addressed the council, and although I understood not the language of the country, I perceived that the wise men were greatly moved, the countenance of Thalok was darkened; he withstood the king to his face, casting upon me an evil eye. I trembled with fear, for had I not already suffered through his craftiness?

“Finally the voice of the king prevailed, quiet was restored, and I received this message:

“‘Oh, Dedan, may the gods that rule the waves prosper thy voyage, for thou must once more cross the great deep, making all speed till thou come to

the kingdom of thy master, and carry to him this our message :

“ ‘Most noble and exalted King Melek, sovereign of the East, Kron, thy brother, sendeth thee greeting. We have heard of thy splendor and power, and the excellency of thy government, and would make with thee a treaty of peace forever.

“ ‘As thy people are skillful sea-farers and cunning artificers, send thy ships with all manner of stores to our land ; they shall be returned to thee in safety, laden with the products of our kingdom ; this shall be greatly to the advancement of both nations, for thus shall we rule the world—thou in the East and I in the West. And that the bonds of this treaty may be made sure and perpetual, I do solemnly offer my daughter, Astera, peerless in mind as in beauty, to be given in marriage to the Prince Herekla, thine illustrious son.

“ ‘As the life of man is brief and uncertain, and the seas that divide us are wide and dangerous, if this arrangement is pleasing in thine eyes, send the young prince without delay, that he may be united to his bride.

“ ‘In token of my sincerity, I send, by the hand of Dedan, gifts of the fruits of this land, and especially a ring of transparent gold, wrought with

the royal insignia ; this is for thy son, whereby he may assuredly be known.'

"I went out hastily, for the king's commandment was urgent ; the sailors were speedily summoned, and all prepared for our departure on the morrow.

"But when night fell upon the earth and the city was wrapped in slumber, I could not rest ; and thinking my long unconsciousness in the chamber of Ishma might be the cause, I went forth silently upon the housetops to seek him, and to procure some draught to cause sleep, for the labors of the morrow would be excessive.

"As I came forth, I saw two men lurking beneath the balcony of my window, which aroused suspicion, none being permitted in the streets of the city at that hour. So I proceeded cautiously till I reached the chamber of Ishma, and informed him of what I had seen.

"'It is the hand of Thalok !' he exclaimed ; 'I know of what his subtlety is capable ; thou must not sleep to-night, lest a worse evil befall thee.'

"We then crept along silently till, reaching the place where the men still lay, we heard these words, in whispers :

"'Mazzaroth is the star of his master's nativity, say'st thou ? Then we must not do the deed while it is in the sky, for it is brighter than the star of

our lord Thalok, and Mazzaroth hath an evil eye.'

"We glanced at the heavens; lo! the great star trembled in the west. At this Ishma drew me within his chamber. 'Haste, haste,' he whispered, 'men and cargo are all on board the ship; from this chamber there is a subterranean passage to the quay. Depart this moment, drop noiselessly down the canal; thy life is not worth a handful of sand after that star has set.'

"Oh, King Melek, what need to recount the perils of our departure from the Lotus Land and our homeward voyage? I delayed not to perform the bidding of Ishma; the winds and waves were propitious; thy servant is before thee to deliver the gifts and message of the ruler of the West, and to receive thy gracious commands."

Then said Melek: "Oh, Dedan, by the favor of Baal the Mighty, thou hast more than repaired the losses of thy former voyage; thou shalt receive a bountiful reward in treasure, and from henceforth be called Chief Captain of the ships of Tyre.

"And as by the gift of the god Herekles, bestowed upon my son, thou wert enabled to pass through the confluent waters of two raging seas, I do now solemnly decree, that while Phenicia rules the waves, those dangerous straits shall, in his honor, be called THE GATES OF HEREKLES."

With that the young prince arose and saluted Dedan : " Most valiant chief," he cried, " thou art worthy of all honor and gratitude ; thou hast proved the merits of the cup of Herekles. Another and better ship shall be built, and together we will visit the wonderful country thou hast discovered."

" Say not so, my son," the king interposed, greatly alarmed ; " there is danger ; the stars give a warning. For two years thou must remain at home."

" Do not deny me," the youth replied, while his eyes flashed with a new fire. " I must visit Atlantis ; it is the decree of Fate."

XI.

THE FEAST OF BAAL.

*"Then all was still—the drums and clarions ceased,
Only the roaring of the flames was heard."*

It was morning of the vernal equinox; Magi and astrologer predicted that during the day the Lady Ashtoreth would throw herself into the arms of the god Baal. In modern parlance, a transit of the planet Venus was imminent. This rare event was considered among star-worshipping nations, so auspicious in affairs of love and marriage, that the king and council yielded to the wishes of the prince, and his departure for the kingdom of Atlantis was fixed for an early day.

The expectant city was astir before dawn, and when the beautiful morning star peeped over the hills, and the pursuing sun majestically followed, flooding the world in glory, ten thousand voices shouted a welcome: "All hail, Ashtoreth and Baal! Givers of life and fortune, hail!"

As the level rays streamed through the portal of the temple and rolled along the marble floor,

the enclosing curtains were withdrawn, unveiling the images of the god and goddess, bathed in rosy light and seated in a gilded car. The ready priests seized the silken traces, the idols were drawn to the grove and placed before an altar, amid the shouts of the multitude and the roll of drums.

King and courtier walked behind the chariot, followed by an immense crowd, who swarmed through the groves and clustered on the high places.

Herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, with doves and swans, mournfully ascended the hill, made the circuit of the idols, were forced shrinking between two columns of fire, and fell before the pitiless knives of sacrifice. The blood was sprinkled over the crowd and the bodies were thrown upon the altar. Over these combustibles were heaped, and the whole pyre was saturated with inflammable oil, which ran down and filled an encircling trench.

Then while the assembly stood hushed with awe, King Melek, by means of a burning glass, brought down fire from the sun, the river of naphtha ignited, flames leaped upon the altar, devoured the sacrifice, and streamed up to heaven in dense volumes of smoke.

At this moment priest and people beat their breasts, gashed themselves with knives and shouted frantically: "Great Baal, hear us!"

But there were two in that vast assembly who bowed not the knee to Baal, nor called upon the name of the god: Herekla, the prince, who stood calmly observing the awful rites; and near by, in a curtained booth, a maiden, who at the moment when Ashtoreth was to throw herself in the arms of the sun god, would be offered in sacrifice, and, more dreadful still, become a portion of the mid-night feast.

Herekla's eye, sweeping the scene, rested upon the despairing features of this beautiful girl. A captive on an alien shore, no friend or sympathizer near; young and full of life, with possibilities of a long and happy future—in a few hours—— The horror of her fate rose before his imagination; a quick resolve was taken. She should not die to insure his good fortune; the thought was intolerable.

When the morning rites were over, and all had retired for the midday siesta, he sought the presence of his father and begged that the life of the captive be spared for his sake. The king listened in surprise. Was the heart of his son stirred by compassion only, or had softer sentiments at last found place in that impassive soul? Might this not be the first link of a chain, that would fetter the ambition of the prince till the dangerous crisis was over? Melek pondered, and promised to consult the Magi.

XII.

IONA THE CAPTIVE.

*"Now diamond drops bedew the lea,
And whitest blossoms veil the tree,
And bluest waves dance on the sea."*

THE appeal of Herekla was successful.

As the sun lingered on the western horizon and a small dark spot slowly crossed its disk, the usual rites were performed in the temple. Cakes of flour and honey were offered to the Queen of Heaven, but no human sacrifice defiled the altar of Ashtoreth.

And now throughout the city were heard the sounds of revelry. Feasting and drinking, dance and song, soon degenerated into gross debauchery, for morality was no part of the worship of Baal. At midnight Herekla left the distasteful scene. As he passed through the court Medoc, the chamberlain, followed and saluted him.

"Dear master," he said, "be persuaded; go to the temple of Eryx, there thou wilt meet Ash-toreth."

“Nay,” said the prince, gravely, “the temple of Eryx I will not enter, but walking in Eden, I may discover Chavah.”

The chamberlain, who acted upon the king’s suggestion, bowed and departed.

Wise Herekla! didst thou, by the intuition of a pure soul, thus early distinguish good from evil? Or hadst thou read in ancient legend that when God bestowed upon Adam his helpmate Chavah, a woman pure and fair, the devil placed in his path Ardat Lilith, a witch, beautiful to behold, yet foul and wicked; mother of the sorceress brood, who from that time forward by their enticements, have been the curse and opprobrium of humanity, whose syren shores are strewn with wrecks of glorious manhood, health, reputation, fortune, soul!

The noise and glare of the banquet hall grew indistinct as Herekla passed through the walks of the inner court, and sought the garden tower, where he was to sleep. He went to the observatory and consulted once more his maritime charts and the stars of heaven. Returning, he paused for a moment in the trellis walk that led to his chamber to contemplate the beauty of the night. The soft wind swaying the fountain, the perfume of flowers, the unclouded sky, the silent shadows lying on the turf, the distant sounds of revelry,

with thought of his departure from the home he loved, all conspired to soften his feelings. At such illusive moments, stern duty is wont to relax her grasp and the heart yield to tender emotion.

A low sigh is heard, the echo of his own ; he turns, and near him stands the captive maid. She is unlike the daughters of the land. Her fair pale face is irradiated by the moonbeams, her blue eyes are upturned to heaven, the waving tresses of her well-poised head are gathered into a heavy knot and bound by a fillet of gold, her white robe is girdled by a band of the same precious metal, her unsleeved arms circled by jewelled bracelets, her bosom heaves with sighs.

Herekla was startled and confused.

"Who art thou?" he demanded, recovering himself.

"I am called Iona in my native land."

"Whence camest thou?"

"From Helles, a captive in thy father's ship."

"Why art thou in this place, at this hour?"

The fair head drooped, a flush suffused her features ; she shivered and replied : "Thou hast saved my life ; I am here by thy father's command, and I am a slave."

Herekla paused ; his quick apprehension solved the mystery — this plot of his father's and the priests. By some newly awakened interest, by

some love entanglement, they would delay his departure.

Presently he spoke: "Iona, hast thou a mother?"

"My mother mourns my absence in her Pelasgian home."

"Hast thou a lover?"

"The noble Diomede is my lover, and is beloved by me."

"Wouldst thou see them again?"

"Oh, my lord!" cried the captive, while tears sprung to her eyes.

Herekla called his trusty servant.

"Orziba, take thou this signet, accompany the maiden to the harbor, where lie many ships at anchor. Seek the master of the Sea Bird, which sails at dawn for the land of the Pelasgi. Tell him that Herekla, its owner, wills that he convey this maiden to her home in Helles, and that he show her due honor and courtesy."

Iona would have knelt to thank her deliverer, but he prevented her, saying: "Spare me, fair captive. May thy voyage be speedy and prosperous."

XIII.

S A I L E D.

*"The eastern sky grows bleak and cold,
The day is nearly done,
My ship rocks in a path of gold
Mapped by the setting sun."*

THE equinoctial storms were over, the weather was propitious, artifice could not entangle the young prince or change his determination to visit the newly-discovered country, and King Melek reluctantly consented to his departure. The ships designed for the voyage had been built under his supervision. No fairer vessels had ever ploughed the waters of Cham, and the heart of Herekla swelled with pride as he contemplated the result of his careful study of marine architecture.

The ship appropriated to his especial use was built of the famous Cyprian wood, and named by his father The Sun, in honor of Baal. Its consort, designed for the bride, in which to transport the retinue and treasure, was called The Moon, in honor of the goddess that rules the waves.

The methods of the journey had been wisely

ordered. Chilmad, a merchant of vast experience, had care of the lading and stores. Wares and products of all the nations of the East were collected as a present for King Kron. These were silks, carpets and muslins, amber, myrrh, cinnamon and cassia, incense and almug trees, chefit wood and ebony, glass of opalescent hue, balsams and leopard skins. For the bride, there were robes, ornaments of precious metal, ivory and bronze, gems, instruments of music, girdles, mantles and mirrors. Dedan and Karmos were appointed captains, Kadmon the Pundit and Madai the Persian were the chosen companions and councillors of the young voyager.

The vessels were to go out with the tide, and the entire population of the city thronged the shore and crowded the quays to witness the embarkation.

After receiving the parting embrace of his father and mother, the iron chain that barred the entrance to the harbor was dropped, and Herekla stepped upon the deck of *The Sun*. His superb form was draped in robes of Tyrian dye richly embroidered with the insignia of his rank, the fillet and cap of an Eastern prince crowned the shapely head and proud features, and when he threw off the cable that linked the vessel to the shore, and waved his farewell, the universal shout,

“Long live the prince!” was no empty adulation.

As the rustling sails responded to the breeze, and the keel of the ship dashed the blue waters into foam, the heart of Herekla sang:

“Farewell, farewell, dear friends and home beloved. Farewell, ye steeds of Joktan, incomparable in speed and beauty; none shall draw rein over your necks till I return. The winds whisper, the waves murmur, ‘On and beyond are the paths of glory. Mighty is he who conquers the sea.’ I go to the land where the sun finds rest, I follow the track of the sailing stars. There the Queen of the Sunset, the Star of the Evening, is waiting for me.”

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XIV.

AT THE GATES.

“LIKE THE STARS, UNHASTING, UNRESTING.”

*“Be of good heart—we cannot fly
The dangers of the place,
But we can conquer them.”*

THE voyagers sped prosperously, for by the aid of chart and compass these enterprising sons of Cush had acquired the art of night sailing. After touching at the colonial islands, in the Sea of Cham, they followed the track of Dedan's voyage, passed the Gates of Herekles in safety, and skirting the outer shore northward, came to a fine harbor and promontory named Gades, where they rested three days before encountering the perils of the exterior ocean, named by the sailors the Sea Muhit.

On the evening previous to the day of their departure, the two sages stood together upon the sandy beach, while the young prince climbed the rocks on the shore. Suddenly the eyes of Kadmon became fixed upon the distant horizon,

as if trying to pierce the overhanging mist. Madai addressed him, but he made no answer, and seemed absorbed in troubled thought or vision. At length he turned abruptly and said :

“ Dear brother, thou must again cast the horoscope of the prince. I cannot trust myself at this moment. Thou knowest the day and hour of his birth.”

The night was fair, the stars were brilliant. Madai at once took observations, and applied himself to chart and formula, placed the result before his associate, after which they sought Herekla in great alarm.

“ Dear master,” said Madai, “ the aspect of the heavenly bodies is portentous ; their position is changing rapidly, and the combinations are malific almost without precedent. Our lords, Adar, Merodach, and Nergal, are conjoined in the eighth house, and in the constellation Cancer. The moon is on the cusp ; Adar the Malignant rules for the next month, retrograding to the fourth house in the constellations of the Twins. The moon in setting is afflicted by Nergal and Adar. This presages great disaster, earthquakes, floods, and violent death.” He paused a moment, and then continued : “ But before the Lady of Night shall have twice waxed and waned, she will separate from the square of Nergal and enter the trine of

Ashtoreth, who will hang in the cusp. This signifies good fortune."

"Let us not hesitate," said Herekla, "if the end be favorable."

"This much for moon and planets," Madai replied. "But what means the voice of the eternal stars? For during an eclipse of the sun, which we perceive is about to take place, thy star, Mazzaroth, will blaze forth at midday in the western heavens; and even now a new star, strange and fearful, faintly glows in the northern sky."

While he was yet speaking, a shower of meteors flashed from the western heavens and fell into the sea. The Persian, greatly agitated, paced the sandy shore where the three had been standing.

Kadmon now addressed the prince:

"No doubt the crisis of thy Fate is near; that which I presaged while we were yet in Cacara, that which so alarmed thy royal parents. The stars have an evil aspect, the meaning is dubious, the result is a secret of the Future. Will it not be wise to put about the ship and return to the nearest colony, or linger in this place until the danger be past? Can we otherwise justify ourselves to thy father?"

Herekla pondered long and made answer: "No man can escape from Fate; a brave spirit will con-

quer Destiny. Like the stars, I must go forward, though the heavens fall ! ”

The wings of night overshadowed the sea, the distant horizon grew dim, sky and water faded to indistinguishable gloom. The friends sat in thoughtful silence ; each felt that startling events and an uncertain future were before them. This hour might be the last for that interchange of thought and sentiment, which had so long been their bond of friendship. As the darkness increased, a shadow fell upon the soul of Kadmon, and he spoke mournfully : “ Thou hast the undaunted courage and resolution of youth, my Herekla, but with age and study come doubt and caution, yet thou shalt have thy will, dear prince, for whether we go on, or return, the end is one. I have pondered long upon the mystery of human existence, the mission and destiny of man. I have found that all of earth is illusion—and the end, absorption into the One all-pervading Force.”

The others made no answer, hoping that the Arhat would continue a subject they had often discussed, and in which they were greatly interested.

Presently the sage resumed : “ We wake to consciousness, we know not from what ; our wondering eyes behold the sky, the earth, the faces of kindred ; our ears are entranced by loving voices,

music, and stir of the elements; we inhale perfumed air, we taste food and are satisfied, we bask in sunshine; soft languor overpowers us, we sleep and are refreshed. We love—a double sense awakes the soul to richer life. Oh, happy world, thy name is Paradise!

“A discord enters—the sun scorches, the winds chill, harsh words and sorrowful wailings distract the ear. The fruits of Eden turn to ashes on the lip, sleep forsakes us, pain racks the body, fear torments the soul; we fight to retain our flitting happiness, in vain. And now stalk in vague shadowy forms, which take shape before our unwilling eyes, Injustice, Treachery, Error, and Sin: under their noxious blight, Faith, Hope, and Youth soon die, and Love worn out by Disenchantment or Satiety, falls in a mortal swoon.

“Another spectre now confronts us, dulls the sense, saps the strength, palsies the frame, steals the weapons of defense, and Old Age or Accident delivers us over to inexorable Death.

“Oh, evil, miserable world, thy name is Hell.

“We know that we entered this present existence, but whence?

“That we have sinned and suffered, but why?

“That we must go hence, but whither?

“The body thrilling with pleasure or tortured by pain, the heart bounding with joy or sinking in

despair, the brain devising good or evil, these we know will moulder to dust. But the animating principle, Atma, the spirit, what is its condition ?

“Paradise for Youth—Hell for Manhood—Death for Age, and then ?”

He paused, and Madai taking his hand gently, spake thus :

“Dear brother, this is to thee an hour of darkness ; some phantom overpowers thee ; the shadow will soon pass, and thy soul again be illuminated. Oh, Kadmon, thou who hast initiated us into the Mysteries of the Ages, who hast trained eye and ear to perceive occult wisdom, and hast calmly looked in the face of Danger and Death ; and thou, beloved Herekla, whose feet even now press the threshold of Paradise, look upward to the vault of night, where the eternal fires tremble and flare in the all-pervading breath. Listen to the rushing wind, the surging sea. The flowing stream, the flitting cloud, the flame that quivers and reaches toward the sun, the rustling leaf, the crepitating insect, each sound and motion of nature whisper to man, ‘ Life, life, unending life ! ’

“ Shall the tree mourn because it must sleep through the wintry night ? Foolish one, thy strength and beauty will be greater in the spring time.

“Shall the worm tremble as it weaves its shroud? Fear not, poor, creeping thing, thou shalt yet sip nectar and soar to the clouds.

“Activity and repose succeed each other in one eternal round. Wouldst thou, oh, man, remain the same forever? Nay, nay! Stagnation is death, progress is life.

“Joy for youth, wisdom for manhood, and change to higher life for age. All this is—or may be—transformation for the body, transmigration for the soul.

“By all the analogies of nature, by the yearning of the human heart, by the divine intuitions of enlightened men, we must believe that body and spirit, atoms and force, are facts and principles eternal.”

Again there was a pause, after which Herekla spoke.

“Oh, my friends, I will now relate an experience which I have hitherto regarded as too sacred for utterance.

“One evening my glorious steeds carried me into the mountains of Lebanon, and being wrapped in thought, I heeded not their flight, till I was borne far into the heart of the range. Return was impossible, for darkness had settled upon the unfamiliar paths. I gave the horses mountain grass and water from the rills, and when they were sat-

isfied I laid me down fasting under the shadow of a rock, repeating the formula of a chela, but sleep came not to my eyelids. In the solemn stillness of the night the interests that had so absorbed my life in the valley below faded like a dream.

“From the snowy peaks of Lebanon my eyes swept upward to the climbing stars, onward through the band of quivering light that encircles the worlds. Then saw I the architecture of the heavens, the order of the universe. My eyes grew strong to penetrate, till suddenly, low in the southern sky, beyond the starry cross, where azure melts to blackness, a vision met my sight which scarce can be described by words of mortal man.

“I saw upon vanishing folding scrolls the impress of character, the record of the lives of men; slowly paling or deeply glowing in awful obscurity were hideous naked forms, distorted shapes, lean, shrunken outlines, malignant faces and blood-dabbled hands.”

The Arhats exchanged glances as Herekla continued :

“Shrieking with terror, I would have turned away, but some irresistible power held every sense. I gazed yet more intently, and far beyond this place of horror, beyond the ocean of ether, I discovered, as it were, luminous shadows, floating in an atmosphere of glory, souls perfect in bliss as in

beauty, whose features were radiant by reason of love and purity.

"Then I wept with joy, and thanked the Maker and Disposer of events; and when I looked again I saw nought but soft clouds rising over the sea and the stars growing dim in the light of early dawn."

There was deep silence after Herekla paused, till Kadmon spoke: "Blessed art thou, oh Herekla. Thou art Budda, enlightened, thou hast sought and found knowledge; to the pure only is such truth revealed.

"Thou hast entered Devachan and Avitchi, where the soul reaps the harvest of its human life. Thine eyes have looked upon the World of Effects, upon the scroll where, by his own acts, the record of man is made."

"Oh, favored seer," said Madai, with awe, "were the forms individual in the dreadful shades of Duyhak?"

"They were," the young man replied. "I saw — I remember, — I shudder. Spare me, my friends."

Presently he continued: "But among the luminous names in upper glory I knew the forms of Madai and Kadmon; I saw my own shadow, and — another walked by my side.

"Oh, friends, the spirit of man transcends the

glory of the stars ; these turn not affrighted though heaven trembles and earth quakes ; and shall we fear ? Nay, though the elements rage, though the sea devour and death shall swallow us, we will go forward and fulfill our destiny."

Night was far advanced, yet the three friends thought not of retiring. No other word was spoken ; motionless and silent they watched the great surges rolling in from the outer sea, and listened to the roar as they dashed against the beach. Soothed by the monotony, overpowered by the immensity, they rested in the realm of thought till dawn ushered in the day of their departure from the land of Gades.

XV.

THE EDEN OF THE WEST.

*"The island rested on the glass
Of breathless dreamy waters."*

*"There breathed a fragrance from the shore
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood."*

THE skill and experience acquired by Dedan during his voyage of discovery, now proved of incalculable advantage.

Despite some stormy weather, in seventy days after leaving the port of Cacara the white peaks of the volcanoes appeared on the western horizon, and in a few hours the vessels were safely moored in the outer harbor of Pirhua.

The pilot recognized Dedan and his sailors. The Phenician ships, which had been anxiously expected, were immediately convoyed through the seagate and drawbridge, up the grand canal, to the foot of the city of Atlan.

Great is the expectation of the prince and his attendants; the magnificence of Atlantean civil-

ization fills them with astonishment. The immense monoliths that face the walls of the canals and form the quays, docks, and storehouses, the marvellous skill by which strength and elegance are united, surpass anything known in the Eastern world. Kadmon declares the structures more wonderful than the rock temples and subterranean cities of Hindustan.

The order and quiet of the crowded thoroughfares are novel and surprising. By means of dials conspicuous in every district, all the business of the city is perfectly systematized ; at fixed hours food is taken, sleep is sought, labor begins or ends. No carriage or foot passenger going toward the centre of the island is ever seen on the left ; none going from the centre on the right ; none may cross the streets except on elevated bridges. The same right of way prevails on the canals ; and thus, in the midst of a crowd, accident is avoided and order maintained. Over the smooth clean pavements, horses prance and chariots rumble without dust or noise.

The climate and verdure are a perpetual surprise to the dwellers of the arid East. In the bland moist air, vegetation flourishes continuously, trees of gigantic proportions wave signals to the stars, ambitious vines covered with bloom aspire to their topmost boughs. No unclad earth

or barren sand offend the eye, the turf is an emerald carpet, clusters of flowers relieve the deep green of the hedges, zephyrs bear to the delighted sense health-giving perfume.

In this thornless Eden, fruits, such as have never since satisfied the desire of man, ripened in perennial harvest ; the use of flesh as food was almost unknown, and perfect health prevailed.

The voyagers were welcomed at the landing by court officials and a band of soldiers. Ishma, overjoyed to behold once more Oriental faces and costumes, embraced them with tears, for he at once recognized by their language and other secret signs the presence of advanced sages. He initiated them in the etiquette of the Atlantean court, and in the king's name presented the prince with a signet which conferred the liberty of the island. The guests were then escorted to the royal residence, the Palace of Hesper, and left undisturbed for a day to recover from the fatigues of the voyage.

The northwestern wing of the quadrangle near the apartments of Ishma was appropriated to their use. The chamber of the prince was a marvel of beauty and luxury.

The flat ceilings and walls of Phenician palaces were of glass, enwrought with mosaic of diverse colors ; here was a rotunda hung with gorgeous

tapestries, surmounted by a dome of transparent blue, embossed with silver stars. The furniture was of ivory overrun in designs of green and gold.

A murmuring stream flowed at the base of the outer wall, and upon the terraced bank rose lofty evergreens, whose tops, caressing the clouds, were at once a protection from the heat and a screen of living verdure through which the white peaks of the volcanoes were visible.

To the west was seen fair Ziçlan and its Floating Garden ; on the sky-tinted bosom of the lake boats of fantastic shape lay motionless, or dreamily swung between earth and heaven.

After refreshments and a bath, the prince sought the cool shade of his chamber, and, overcome by the fatigue of the voyage and excitement of arrival, rested through the midday hours.

The silence of a tropical noonday fell upon the air ; bird and beast were taking their siesta ; the cicada's grating wings were still ; a fitful breeze wafted to the tired sense perfume of flower and drowsy hum of bee ; all the surroundings breathed of unbroken peace and tranquillity. The apartment was noiseless, but for the monotonous drip of a fountain in the centre of the marble floor, the colors were soothing, the half shadows grateful to the eye, the atmosphere slumberous, and Herekla,

while yielding to these influences, remembered the spell that enchanted Dedan, and wondered if this were not indeed the realm of calm forgetfulness, the Lotus Land, where care and toil being over, the shadows point always to the East, even the Land of the Afternoon.

Alas, how dull is human prevision,
A hush often portends the tempest !

XVI.

THALOK.

*"In the cup of sin he would dissolve thee,
Thou most precious pearl—then drink thee up."*

CONSPICUOUS among the high officials who received the Phenician ambassadors at the landing was Thalok, the high-priest. This notable man was tall and handsome, but of haughty mien; before his bold, flashing eyes the most daring glance would falter. His manner and aspect indicated a cool brain, a colder heart, hot passions, and indomitable will. His motive in this act of condescension was purely selfish; he would know at the earliest possible moment the character and temper of the new element about to be introduced into the political complications at the court of King Kron.

The guests having been escorted to the palace, Thalok retired to the privacy of his chamber and gave himself to profound meditation.

"The Phenicians have arrived," he mused.
"In the present state of affairs, possibly this is

well ; they must be made subservient to my purpose. Yet they look not like men easily duped ; their eyes pierce below the surface ; they will require delicate management.

“ The prince is physically magnificent ; he has intellect, courage, and will to supplement his strength—that is evident from his lofty carriage and fearless eye. I doubt the expression of his face—it has honor’s impress ; the mouth is tender, the smile is sweet—not one dark line ; a face and form to please a woman. Would I could look like this foreigner and be—what I am. I were then more sure of success in certain quarters. Atla’s doubtful sentiments are my most formidable obstacle. Unlike other women, she is strong and brave ; the man who wins her adds to his own power. Can I bend her to my will ?

“ This suspense is unendurable. I will know her mind at once—before she sees the prince. Some insane fancy may—— Oh, Thalok, that was a boyish jealousy. Herekla is the betrothed of Astera, and Atla is the soul of honor—a good quality in a woman. But possibly she may desire to accompany her friend to Tyrhena. That must not be permitted—I must obtain her promise to remain in Atlantis. If her faith be plighted, I am sure.

“ But Atla avoids and even repels me ; I cannot penetrate the environment of her lofty soul.

How shall I get speech with her? By what means gain her favor?

"All women are pleased with finery and devotion; I have both to offer. Surely in this she will not belie her sex."

He went to a cabinet and took therefrom various superb articles of luxury, and, after rejecting many, laid aside an ivory casket containing a coronet of diamonds and sapphires; a royal mantle, embroidered in gold and lined with ermine; a silken carpet, representing a garden and fountain of gems; and, lastly, a lyre of extraordinary beauty and sweetness of tone.

These works of art were priceless in value, and, after viewing them complacently, he called his page.

"Zilba," he said, "I am about to honor thee with a confidence. Which of these gifts thinkest thou will best please a fair lady?"

The page, a youth of remarkable grace and beauty, whose peculiarly lustrous and restless eyes had given him the name, "Zilba of the glittering eye," carefully scrutinized each fair treasure; his face flushed and his breath came fast, but he made no answer.

Thalok was gratified by this evident appreciation; but, becoming impatient of delay, commanded him to speak.

Zilba bowed low, and, with eyes averted, said :
“ Which of these gifts, says my lord, will best please a fair lady ? If she be ambitious, the crown ; if vain, the mantle ; if luxurious, the carpet ; if spiritual, the harp—but, if she loves thee, one kiss of thine outweighs them all.”

Thalok was startled ; he had never given his page credit for so much penetration, or such delicate sentiment. Could Zilba have had experience in love affairs ? Impossible ; and yet he had observed the boy often linger near Zarah, the Lady Atla’s maid.

This feeling of surprise gradually merged itself into a displeased consciousness that in some way he had compromised himself, and, turning to Zilba, he said, coldly : “ Fold these baubles, present them to the Lady Atla, and with Thalok’s love and duty, humbly beg her acceptance.

“ She is now alone on the north balcony of the pavilion in the Garden of Palms. There is a secret door in the basement of the conservatory—know it by the color of this key. The passage beyond leads to the corridor of her apartments. Swing the picture that covers the door outward, and make it fast again. Address the lady with all due worship ; deliver the message ; mark well her words and manner ; then return by the open way,

and, if thou lovest life, prate not with any one. Hasten, for the day declines."

Zilba went out as directed; but soon returned, bringing back the treasures. Thalok's eyes flashed; he raised his hand, as if about to give the messenger a blow, but checked himself, saying:

"How is it my gifts are not delivered?"

"I humbly offered them, and they were rejected."

"Rejected? In what manner?"

"The manner of Princess Atla was gentle but firm."

"What said she?"

"'Give my duty to Lord Thalok, and say that royal gifts do not befit an untitled maiden.'"

"Said she aught else?"

"I ventured to urge that she had higher claims to royal gifts, and even queenship, than any mere title could bestow."

"Boy, thou wert bold. But what answer did the lady give?"

"She answered so coldly that I shivered. Her words were these: 'Return the gifts to their owner; they are not for me. Take this for thy trouble, poor boy,' giving me a piece of gold. My lord, the lady is not ambitious, nor vain, nor yet luxurious. She may be spiritual; she is certainly cold. No color suffused her cheek, no sparkle

flashed from her eye. Perchance a kiss might warm this frozen statue."

Thalok regarded his page curiously. What did this keen interest, this subtle discrimination imply? Had Zilba dared to love the peerless Atla? He gave a penetrating glance, but seeing nought save conscious innocence, he briefly dismissed the boy, and arraying himself in his most magnificent robes, went out alone.

XVII.

A T L A.

. *"She rose up in the silent night,
 She made her dagger sharp and bright."*
.

ATLA remained in the balcony where the page of Prince Thalok left her, absorbed in unquiet thought. The warm light of the setting sun lingered among her golden tresses, and irradiated her lovely face and figure with more than mortal beauty. Yet her features wore a troubled expression, for the event that had just taken place increased a feeling of isolation and danger, by which at times she was greatly oppressed. Her position at the court of King Kron was anomalous; she, a waif from the broad stream of human life, stranded upon an alien shore, holding place only by sufferance. Ishma, her father by adoption, was also a foreigner, and without influence, except through royal favor, proverbially uncertain.

Several of the young nobles of Atlantis had offered her honorable marriage, but even before an

answer could be given each suitor, by some mysterious fatality, died or disappeared.

She had observed with increasing repugnance and distrust, the admiring glances and covert flatteries of the high-priest, attentions she intuitively dreaded, but which, till this hour, she had successfully ignored.

Now they had assumed a definite, obtrusive form, and had been rejected.

What would be the consequence of this grave offense? To whom could she appeal for protection? To no one. Her defense must be from within, she must fight out this battle alone; courage and firmness were her only weapons. Her only weapons? Nay, the dagger at her girdle, by some undefined intuition, had been made sharp and bright; her northern hand was strong, her nerves unflinching, but violence must be the last resort of desperation. Oh, that some superhuman power would bestow its aid!

As the half-formed prayer faltered upon her lips, a step within the chamber roused her. She started, and her face flushed crimson as she recognized the intruder. She would have withdrawn, but Thalok, standing in the entrance of the balcony, barred the way.

After an instant of confusion she said, formally:

“My lord, to what strange chance am I indebted for this unannounced visit?”

“Atla,” he said, in a voice trembling with passion, “I will answer the question plainly. I am drawn hither by an irresistible attraction. I am no longer master of my heart, scarcely of my actions. I cannot live without thy love. Thou art now, and must remain for ever, in the empire of my affection, a thronéd queen.”

Atla was greatly alarmed by this outburst of passion. A cry would no doubt bring speedy assistance, but embarrassing questions and explanations must necessarily follow, distressing to herself and exasperating to Thalok. She therefore determined to temporize, hoping that some person would appear, or something happen for her relief.

She assumed a careless manner, and with slight irony replied:

“My lord, I know nothing of love, and am still too young to think of marriage. I beg you will press me no further upon a subject so extremely distasteful. Coming years may bring a change of feeling; at present it is worse than useless to urge this matter.”

“But I cannot wait these years, uncertain of the change they may bring. Reflect, dear Atla. A maiden young, beautiful, nameless and alone, with no protector or friend, is exposed to a thou-

sand perils. With me thou art safe, honored, titled, unassailable. The splendor and power of the whole earth will be laid at thy feet, and with them the doting adoration of Thalok." Extending his hand, he added: "Dearest Atla, give me the token of acceptance."

Atla, with frigid formality, made answer:

"Thou wouldst not prize my hand without my heart, and that I cannot give. My fancy is no more within control than is thine own, my lord. I have no love for thee; nor yet for any man."

"Thou'rt fair as the snows of Noraghi, and as cold; but my fervor, like its fires, will melt thy heart of ice."

"My lord, when snows are warmed they are snows no longer. Prince Thalok would soon tire of tepid water."

"Atla," he said, firmly, "do not trifle; I am in no jesting mood. There is not a high-born lady in Atlantis but would kneel to gain my favor."

"All the world knows thy boast is not idle; therefore, my lord, I pray thee waste not thine affection on one so humble; bestow thy gifts and thy devotion on the ladies of the court; there wilt thou find a better mate than I." Then, fearing she had spoken rashly, she added: "Spare me for the present, my lord, I will council with the king and Ishma."

The countenance of Thalok darkened ; his expression was terrible, his manner changed.

"Foolish child," he cried, harshly, "wouldst thou throw thyself on the protection of the king ? Know, then, that there is no power in Atlantis greater than that of the high-priest. Neither man nor woman dare dispute my will, or brave my wrath. Thy weak caprice will not avail. Impassive maid, thy will must bend to mine."

Having previously dealt with spirits inferior to his own, Thalok miscalculated the strength of the slight girl now before him.

Atla's face blanched for an instant, but not through fear ; then the transmitted blood of generations of heroes rushed like fire along her veins, mounted to her cheek, and strung her nerves with steel. She bounded to her feet and confronted Thalok. She spoke ; every word fell with clear, ringing emphasis.

"My lord, thy threats intimidate less than thy blandishments allure. With princely courtesy thou dost remind me that I am friendless, nameless, alone. 'Tis true, my origin is involved in obscurity, my country and my people are unknown, but of one thing let Lord Thalok be assured—no drop of coward blood runs in my veins. I am not defenseless, as thou mayst prove to thy hurt. I shall not bend to thy will ; if forced beyond en-

duration I shall take my own life"—then sinking her voice to an impressive whisper, "or *mayhap I shall take thine.*"

She stood erect, defiant, self-sustained ; her blue eyes gleamed cold and dangerous as a dagger's blade ; her right hand clenched the silver ornament suspended at her girdle.

There was an inflexible determination in her whole bearing that could not be disregarded, and would not be trifled with.

For the first time in his life of desperate intrigue the sovereign priest met a spirit more resolute and daring than his own, for the first time he encountered the majesty of indignant virtue ; his meretricious lance was shattered, even before it touched the heaven-forged armor of pure womanhood.

Thalok owned himself baffled, defeated ; and, bowing low, he retired.

XVIII.

WHISPERS IN THE WIND.

As the form of her unwelcome guest disappeared through the outer gate, Atla left the balcony and walked rapidly to a shadowy recess in the garden, where a great fountain sent up its ghostly spray. Here she reviewed the hazardous struggle which had just taken place, and strove to calm her perturbed spirit. In vain did she strive to maintain that tranquillity which Ishma had assiduously taught her to cultivate, and which had become the habit of her life; in vain did she repeat the forms of prayer.

Atla was an improvisatrice, and found expression for her deepest emotion in song. Like the sound of the wind harp, her music began, she scarce knew when, and died, she scarce knew where; and now she gave words to an ill-defined uneasiness that would not be dissipated :

“ On the breeze I hear voices of warning,
There are sighs in the bland air of night ;
Though mist fades away at the dawning,
Ghosts flit in the spectral moonlight.

“ Hark ! there’s a roar on the mountain ;
List to the moan of the sea :
Like tears fall the drops of the fountain,
In the gloom of the dark cypress tree.

“ Alone in the darkness I shiver,
A foul spirit stands in my path ;
No powerful friend to deliver,
I must suffer his love or his wrath.

“ Gray ocean, if I am thy daughter,
Let me to thy bosom return ;
Beneath the black pall of thy water,
No death-fire of passion can burn.”

As her voice died away, and the twilight deepened, the shape of the fountain seemed slowly to change, and two ghostly figures to emerge from the spray ; they were faintly luminous, but vague and shadowy as mist.

One was tall and grand, like a stern warrior ; his face and powerful limbs were white, his locks were fair, his eyes blue stars in the edge of a cloud.

The other was a woman, proud and beautiful ; her face was like an angel’s, her long, golden tresses floated lightly on the stream.

Atla’s eyes were fascinated by this apparition ; but when a gust of wind swayed the fountain and the phantoms bent over her, she trembled. Then the faces grew sweet with love unspeakable,

the grand figure stretched out its shadowy arms, and a voice, solemn as the muffled thunder of a water-fall, uttered the words: "Depart, depart, depart!" Then a sound, soft as the plash of the fountain, swept by, and seemed to murmur: "Woe, woe, woe! The waves that lap the shore whisper, Woe!"

Atla opened her eyes. Had they but that moment closed? Did she dream? The waters of the fountain were climbing toward the stars, and falling hopelessly back into the basin, as she had always seen them, and the voice of Astera was heard calling from a distance:

"Atla, dear sister, where art thou? Here in solitude? I sought thee in the chamber, where stands the neglected harp. Come, sing for me, dear sister, and drive away my gloom."

"Astera," she replied, "think you not the garden is warm and stifling to-night? The place is filled with phantoms." Then, checking herself: "Shall we not go to the terrace roof of the palace? In that lofty height we shall better catch the evening breeze."

"With great pleasure," Astera rejoined. "I am restless, and would fain have change."

XIX.

F A T E .

*“ Two shall be born the whole wide world apart,
And speak in different tongues and have no thought
Each of the other's being, and no heed.
And these o'er unknown seas, to unknown lands
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death,
And all unconsciously shape every act
And bend each wandering step to this one end—
That some day, out of darkness they shall meet
And read life's meaning in each other's eyes.”*

WHILE Herekla rested in the enchanted atmosphere of his chamber, the necessary packages were brought from the ship, and, when he awoke at twilight, Sardas was ready with the royal robes. After the toilet was finished, finding Kadmon and Madai still asleep, the prince, attended by his servant only, went out upon the roof of the palace to obtain a view of the city and enjoy the evening air. Skirting the borders of the hanging gardens, he came to a tower that obstructed the pathway. As he paused a moment to decide his course, a lady appeared at the half-curtained door.

Her graceful figure, brought into relief by the soft light within, was draped in a robe of pale blue, confined at the waist by a girdle. Upon the right shoulder was a badge of rank, and her head was crowned with an aureola of golden hair. Her face and arms were delicate as the almond blossom; her eyes were blue as the sea of Cham; her mouth expressed a pride and dignity that scarcely concealed its tenderness.

Shrouded by the outer darkness, Herekla stood undiscovered, and immovable through surprise and admiration.

A soft voice in the chamber addressed the lady. She responded by sweeping the strings of a lyre, accompanying the music by song. The words were in a foreign tongue, but breathed that natural language by which genius can convey ideas to any responsive soul.

Herekla listened, and his heart interpreted. He heard, in tones of sweetness and power, such as he had never imagined, a story of the sea. The rustling sails, the dashing water, the swing of a ship, the boatmen's song. Now a storm is rising; he listens to the cries of the sailors, to words of command; a struggle, a shock, the swell of the surge—the stillness of despair.

The breathing of Herekla is suspended; his senses are swept away in the tempest of song;

but as the voice dies slowly, he recovers, and, forgetting prudence in his bewilderment, he speaks :

“Astera, art thou a star? Nay, the moon in fleecy clouds, bending over a sobbing sea!”

The lady, startled by this unexpected interruption, immediately withdrew, and the curtain was lowered. Herekla moved, as if to follow, but checked himself, saying: “Night has fallen; we can proceed no farther.”

Sardas, to whom this incoherence in his master was an astonishment, became greatly alarmed lest he was losing his reason, the more so, that a band of soldiers, hastily summoned, were now heard approaching. To his great relief, Kadmon and Madai, who followed at leisure, chanced to arrive at this moment, and, upon presentation of the royal seal, the guard saluted the prince and retired.

Herekla briefly related what had just occurred; the party then withdrew to a distance, and, finding a place in this aerial garden, which commanded a magnificent view of the city below and the varied landscape beyond, they sat down to enjoy it at leisure.

To Herekla all seemed like a dream of paradise.

“Walking in Eden, he had discovered Chavah.”

XX.

ASTERA AND ZEMAR.

“AROUND US RAGE THE DEADLY ELEMENTS.”

THE sound of their retreating footsteps had scarcely died away when a young man of distinguished appearance came from the opposite direction. His air of command and lofty carriage, no less than his white tunic banded with gold, cap of trocan plumes and jewelled sandals, marked his near relationship to the imperial family.

The distinguished young nobleman was Prince Zemar, only son of Thalok the high-priest, who designed him for the same profession; but becoming disgusted with the craft and trickery that met him even at the initiation, Zemar utterly refused to take further orders.

The king, his uncle, then offered him command of a military expedition, for which his executive qualities and bravery admirably fitted him; he was, however, aware of the predatory character of

Atlantean campaigns, and feeling the injustice of wars waged for conquest only, he declined a pursuit almost as distasteful to his noble nature as the priesthood of the Sun Serpent. Nevertheless he made himself master of military tactics, the art of navigation and other accomplishments necessary in the education of princes, and also visited the numerous colonies founded by Atlantean enterprise.

Afterward, having carefully studied municipal law, he sought and obtained the office of chief arbiter in the city of Atlan, a position which he had at this time honorably filled for two years, his administration uniting gentleness and tact with firmness and integrity. He was the beloved of all save his own father, whose character and practices suffered greatly by comparison with his son's.

When Zemar reached the tower, he tapped lightly upon the door and inquired of the slave who opened it if the Princess Astera would be pleased to see her cousin.

A voice from the chamber responded: "Wait without, dear Zemar."

Presently a young lady appeared whose dress and manner betokened royalty. She was tall and dark, with rich bloom, beautiful but imperious; her black eyes flashed bright as the diadem that adorned her raven hair.

"Come with me to the battlements in the shadow of the tower," said Astera. "I would overlook the city unperceived, and freely breathe the air of night."

"Leave me, Tula," addressing her attendant.

The maid retired, but a spotted ounce that glided through the doorway and arched his graceful neck against her hand, was allowed to follow. Without other speech they reached a seat upon the battlements, from which the city and plains of Atlan could be seen.

At length Astera spoke: "I know what thou wouldst tell me, dear Zemar,—the Phenician has arrived; I saw the ships enter the basin."

"Yes, and I have seen the prince. He is a man both grand and gentle; one to please a woman's eye and win a woman's heart."

"But if a woman's eye be already pleased and her heart already won? Atla is both grand and gentle, and she is fairer than I. Canst thou transfer thy love to her?"

"Atla is beautiful as a statue and as cold, but even though she had thy fire, my star, 'twould rouse in me no kindred flame.

"Dost thou ask me why? Who can weigh fancy in a balance, or gauge the nice discriminations of a lover's eyes? And not the eye alone elects—an undefinable influence moves the entire

being, mind and soul, body and spirit; yea, all that we call self is no more ours, merged in the existence of another."

"That which we call love, my Astera, is like the flash between two storm clouds—none can foreknow what affinity will determine its course; none can foretell where it will fall; and when it has passed, what power can recall it?"

"Oh, Zemar, playmate of my childhood, friend and lover of later years, thou hast spoken truly. The words I have uttered cannot be recalled, nor can the love I have bestowed. Thou and I, dear Zemar, are the blended clouds, and around us rage the deadly elements."

Zemar clasped her in his arms, then suddenly checking himself, spoke again: "Dost thou remember, my Astera, our narrow escape when Migdar of the North would have thee for his queen? Then every expedient was exhausted. Neither the same device, nor yet another, will now avail. Thy father and mine are inflexible. Listen, beloved, while I explain.

"Thy father, King Kron, adores Atla; he would exalt her to the throne and make her children heirs to his glory; that would be to thy disparagement. But the king is generous; he loves his daughter, and therefore wills that thou wed the Phenician prince, and in a distant home forget

that another fills thy place upon thy father's throne.

"My father, Thalok, has also fastened his eyes upon Atla, with a passion deep and deadly. He loves not me, nor any but himself. He is unscrupulous and cruel. He would wed Atla and place her on the throne—when thy father is removed! For this purpose he withdraws his opposition to the foreign marriage. In the far East thou art no longer an impediment in the way of his ambition and passion—and I must be his pliant tool, or perish. Thalok breaks that which he cannot bend.

"To-morrow thou must see the prince."

"Zemar, I will not see him on the morrow, nor the next morrow, nor yet the day following."

"But, Astera, thou canst not delay!"

"I shall be ill; I am so already. Dost thou not perceive the fever in my veins?"

"It will avail nothing. The dynasty of Atlantis boasts ten thousand years. Long arbitrary rule has made its monarchs inflexible. Will thy father, or mine, yield to our wishes? Nay, I have struggled to break the barriers, in vain."

"Does Atla know aught of this? She is sad and reticent of late—I fancy that something oppresses her. Her songs this evening brought tears to my eyes."

"I hope she knows nothing, nor suspects; it would be unfortunate were she to do so. Atla has a bold spirit; Ishma would become involved in her action, and our one faint ray of hope would be extinguished. He has influence with the king, and Thalok fears him.

"My beloved, to-morrow thou must see the prince; otherwise thy freedom, nay, thy life, is imperilled; this hour is the last I may honorably spend with thee."

Astera drew the feather-mantle more closely round her shoulders, looked over the battlement, and shuddered.

"How sheer and dizzy is the depth," she mused, "how cold and dark the moat; how awful would be the breathless fall, how fearful the deadly shock! Yet I have courage to dare it!

"Zemar, dost thou remember the tradition of Itza the Beautiful? Thus I might leave thee, but never with the Phenician."

"Thou shalt not leave me thus!" cried Zemar, embracing her passionately; "but we can die together! Oh, Astera, must this be our last farewell? Must I henceforth avert my eyes from thine, be deaf to the music of thy voice, and think of thee only as the bride of another? Nay! rather let us die."

At this moment the ounce, lying at Astera's

feet, growled ominously; the midnight signal boomed from the turrets of Kohl, and the princess, from the force of long habit, rose at the sound, and, bidding Zemar an affectionate farewell, hastily retired.

After parting with Astera, Zemar sought the chamber of his friend, the physician. He was warmly welcomed, and, seating himself near the window, spoke abruptly :

“Ishma, I have seen the princess.”

He used an Oriental language which Ishma had taught him as a matter of precaution.

“How did she receive the tidings?”

“She utterly refuses to meet the Phenician prince.”

“It is as I feared; Astera has been the idol of king and court; her every wish indulged, her every word a law. She inherits the firmness of her family. Her refusal is a serious complication.”

“I tried in vain to persuade her; but what do words avail when heart gives the lie to lip? I fear I was a false negotiator. Oh, Ishma, what can be done?”

“We must wait the issues of the morrow,” said the physician, and continued: “Zemar, I have made another startling discovery. While in the Chamber of Secrets, consulting with the king in

regard to customs of the East, I heard a faint indrawn breath, and, after his majesty retired, I found an aperture in the upturned bud of a carved lotus—I then discovered that all sounds under the canopy of the throne converged to this aperture. Every word spoken in that chamber is heard in the temple of Kohl! I caused the position of the throne to be slightly changed; but Thalok's keen glance will at once detect the interference. Who can elude the craft of thy father, who can defeat his machinations?"

"I now remember," said Zemar, "that the ounce, lying at Astera's feet this evening, growled angrily, without apparent cause; the sense of these savage beasts is keen. Mayhap he perceived a hidden danger. Are we safe even in this chamber?"

"He cannot comprehend our conversation; that is our safeguard.

"Now must we rest and prepare for the events before us. Sleep sometimes brings wisdom. May the God of my fathers illuminate the path so beset with snares."

XXI.

LOVE.

“THOU MUST HAVE THY DREAM.”

FROM the window of an adjoining chamber the three Orientals looked out upon the sleeping city—Herekla was speaker. “I feared almost to meet the princess, lest I might feel disappointment or distaste. Who could dream of a soul so pure, in a form so divine and voice unlike all others? It held my spirit, even as the chain of steel subdues the fiery steeds of Joktan. It is magic!

“The dark beauties of the East withdraw into shade; but Astera’s presence is luminous by reason of a celestial fire within. A lode-star among lamps—a snowy dove among flaunting trocans! I am entranced by her syren voice, enchained by the links of her golden hair.

“I am enchained, but she is free—is free and cold. In that sad glance there is no fire of love, it burns without consuming; the voice is firm and clear, it wavers not with passion. How would it speak my name?”

Then, turning abruptly, he said: "Kadmon, hast thou ever loved?"

"My love was Maya," Kadmon sighed. "On the waves of the sacred river it floated far away to the illimitable ocean that encompasses all the world.

"Behold, dear prince, the hollow universe, sprinkled with stars; beneath it, on the plains of Time, flit phantoms pursued by, and pursuing other shapes unsubstantial as themselves, without power to pause in happiness or flee from misery, driven onward by the blast of fate—I was—I am, having left the dull realms of the Sansara, a phantom. The illusive love I fancied I experienced was sweet, enjoyed for a brief moment; but, like the sound of the lyre, it passed to the unknown."

The words of the Hindu were so vague and mystic, that Herekla, uncertain of their true meaning, replied: "Much study of the incomprehensible problems of life and the occult lore of ancient sages has, I fear, blighted the delicate buds of happiness in thy soul, dear Kadmon. Is not the world still full of hope and joy?"

Then, turning to Madai, he added: "Is it not so?"

"It is, and it is not," Madai answered. "Ahura and Ahriman mix the cup of life. Night and day

brood alike over all ; Nature does not discriminate. In the city lying below us, merry youth hold feast and revel ; the watcher sobs by the bedside of the dying ; the council decide the fate of nations ; the mother soothes her infant ; the murderer creeps forth to slay his victim ; fond lovers stay in Eden or perchance weep over love betrayed ; the balances of life and death tremble."

"Dear Madai," said Herekla, "in all these years, how strange, I never thought to say, 'Hast thou too loved ?'"

"Yes, my prince ; sooner or later each human heart thrills to the mysterious influence. For ten happy years the bliss of love was mine ; and then my Rena, from the funeral pyre, went up to dwell among the eternal stars. But I do not mourn, knowing I shall surely follow ; for through all the world a Triad shines, over which a Monad rules ; all things are the progeny of one Fire, and to the bosom of the Triad, Ormazd decrees the soul's return."

Herekla, perceiving that his teachers thus endeavored to check his excessive ardor, smiled softly, as he answered : "Suffer me, dear friends, to rest in the rose-bowers of Eden ; to listen to the music of the lyre, and drink the cup of happiness, if I may.

"This star transcends all other lights celestial ;

but oh, it rides so high in heaven, can I hope to wear it in my crown? Oh, that I might woo her all unknown, that she might love me for myself alone."

"Dear Herekla," said Kadmon, "thou must have thy dream."

XXII.

THE SUN OF THE CRYPT.

IN the arched vault of a subterranean chamber, beneath the temple of Kohl, hung the Quenchless Lamp. A cup of crystal held the precious oil of gold, the priceless legacy of ancient priests, whose secret art ages ago was buried in their tombs. From the asbestos wick glowed a quintuple star, or sun, that had been the light and warmth of this undiscoverable crypt thousands of years, guarded by the vigilance of successive generations of priests and vestal virgins.

In the dome of the vault was a complicated instrument, or parapem, that marked artificial time, and also recorded changes of the heavenly bodies, the ebb and flow of the tides, and variations of air currents. In the side walls of the vault were numerous small apertures, round which were graven hieratic words and symbols.

Upon the eventful evening that followed the arrival of the Phenicians, Thalok, the high-priest, entered this subterranean chamber, and threw

himself upon a luxurious divan beneath the Sun of the Crypt. His garments were of white and gold, over which was now thrown a red cloak lined with ermine. Upon his head was a cap of feathers, banded by the insignia of his office, an emerald serpent with crest of flame, and upon his arm a sacerdotal talisman, set with a powerful burning glass, never used except in great emergencies.

He now held in his hand a goblet of pulque, an intoxicating drink made from the agave, or century plant, a liquor sometimes poured out as a libation to the gods, but more frequently consumed by the priests.

At his side stood Ciquan, the incumbent next Thalok in the priesthood; his chosen companion, his ready tool; a man the equal of his master in all that was evil, his inferior only in courage and sagacity.

Thalok was restless and out of temper; his countenance was not pleasant to behold. Ciquan understood his mood and said nothing, but frequently replenished the goblet of pulque, which the high-priest as constantly emptied.

After repeated draughts, he spoke: "The Phenicians are safely landed and sheltered beneath the roof of the palace, under the protection of the king. Nevertheless, they are in my power; and

wittingly, or otherwise, they shall be my auxiliaries."

"All men are such," said the obsequious subordinate, "and women also, for that matter."

A scowl darkened the face of the high-priest; he moved uneasily, but continued:

"These foreigners look not like men easily tampered with. The prince is a demi-god; if the Lady Astera sees him such, it will be for her advantage."

He rose and paced the room impatiently, then stopped before the lamp.

"Ciquan," he said, "does not the sacred flame burn low to-night?"

"Yes, my lord; some of the currents are stopped."

"Which, think you?"

"That leading to the Chamber of Secrets."

"It is the hand of the physician; he has knowledge of the elementals, though his practice is far different from ours. I would make short work of his interference, if the Lady Atla stood not in my path. If evil befall him, she may grow suspicious. The passions of north women are slow to move; but, when once roused, they are daring and fierce as panther's.

"Atla is glorious when scornful; her eyes flash blue like quivering steel; there is danger in her

glance, and death in her stroke, if it should fall. She must come of a brave and warlike race. Such a creature is worth winning. But, have a care, my lady, thou mayst yet sue at my feet in vain."

"My master dreams," said Ciquan, "while business of importance waits."

"True, Ciquan ; no doubt I am foolishly in love. What is the fancy of youth to a man's deep passion. But we will to business. What is the situation at this moment?"

Ciquan made answer : "Astera, loving Zemar, refuses even to see her new suitor, who, by accident, has had one glimpse of Atla's marvelous beauty, and supposing her to be the princess, has wildly given her his heart. The king walks blindly ; he sees and suspects nothing, so absorbed is he by love for Atla—who now has in her train at least three men enamored by her charms."

The priest moved uneasily, his hand grasped the dagger in his belt.

"The king!" he muttered, savagely. "A few days hence there will be no king in Atlantis, save Thalok. Then Astera shall marry the Prince Herekla, or die a maid. The Phenician shall leave my kingdom with or without a wife. The physician will accompany him, or suffer a worse fate. Thus shall I be rid of foreigners.

"How will all this be accomplished, sayest thou? Listen.

"After the feast of Raynir, the Chatzes, still armed with sacrificial knives, must come to the palace at midnight, and attack the royal guard, who, by that time, will be helpless from intoxication. Three chosen men are already instructed to enter the king's chamber, led on by thee, my Ciquan, to protect his majesty. In the *melée* a blow may happen to fall in the wrong place; a light blow, well directed, lets out life."

"But if this plan should miscarry?"

"I have another, quiet and sure; a plan which I will not divulge, even to thee, my noble Ciquan, for it requires no accomplice."

"Why resort to violence, if another plan be quiet and sure? Is not the easiest way the best way?"

Thalok deigned no answer; his eyes were fixed on vacancy; he muttered some unintelligible words, and turning to Ciquan, said coldly:

"Give me a last report before I sleep."

The subordinate applied his ear to one of the apertures in the wall, and after listening long and intently, replied:

"The ladies have left the palace roof, and are now at the pavilion in the Garden of Palms. Astera has retired with her maid. Atla, from the balcony, breathes softly her wild songs."

Thalok sprung from the divan and took Ciquan's place. Presently he returned, and the other continued: "Nothing from the chamber of Ishma. Zemar, no doubt, is with him."

After a pause he spoke again: "The Orientals mutter in their own language. I cannot catch the meaning."

Another pause. "Kron, the king, sleeps uneasily."

"Would he might never wake," said his brother.

"Enough, good Ciquan. To-night guard thou the Lamp. Let nothing escape thee. And now call Kaipa, for I fain would sleep."

XXIII.

IN THE HALL OF THE GOD.

THE royal household was astir at an early hour next morning, to complete arrangements for the reception of the foreign embassy ; this was to take place in a magnificent rotunda in the centre of the court named the Hall of the God, which was open to the sky in fair weather, and closed by awnings during the rainy season.

In the broad space above, relieved against the blue vault of heaven, was a wonderful group of sculptured figures, suspended in mid-air by invisible means, representing the apotheosis of the founders of the Atlantean Kingdom. Painted upon the wall of the building was a brilliant panorama. The sea-god rides the waves in a scallop-shaped car, drawn by dolphins ; his right hand holds the guiding reins, and his left arm is round the beautiful Kleita, mother of the ten Atlantean princes. In the distance is a volcanic island, rising from the ocean. On other parts of the wall the deeds of his mighty sons are commemorated.

On one side of this stupendous structure was a

high dais, where stood the throne of ivory and pearl, under a canopy of green enamelled gold.

Here King Kron, in royal pomp, awaited his guest. His robe of silver tissue was bordered with gems, his dazzling crown was enriched by two extended wings of transparent gold. Around him were ranged his brothers, the subordinate princes, who had been summoned to receive the Phenician ambassadors, and also to celebrate the annual sacrifice of the Summer Solstice, a festival which fell on the king's birthday.

Presently the sound of silver trumpets announced the nobles and other officials of the realm, who, with music and soldiery, formed the escort of the visitors. These filed to right and left, leaving an open space through the middle of the hall. Then came a train of bearers, strange in dress and physiognomy, who laid the gifts of King Melek on the steps of the dais, prostrated themselves and retired.

And now the breathless hush of expectation fell upon the assembled crowd; every eye was fixed upon the broad archway, as the young prince entered the hall alone.

No need of jewelled cap, brodered caftan, purple robe and gemmed sandals, to proclaim his rank. His grand form, noble bearing, and firm, elastic tread, marked him a king by heaven's own

impress, a son of conquering Anak, most powerful of Eastern monarchs. His proud features were softened by sweetest smile, and an air of inexplicable serenity that astonished while it awed. With infinite grace and dignity he advanced, and knelt at the foot of the throne, until the king, strangely moved, raised and embraced him, and motioning to the vacant place at his right hand, said :

“Welcome to our kingdom and heart, beloved son.”

For a moment every soul in that vast assembly was silent through admiration and surprise, and then, by common impulse, a shout went up :

“Welcome to Atlantis and to our hearts, beloved prince.”

After the attendants of Herekla had been presented, a long discourse of ceremony and business ensued by the aid of Isham, the interpreter. This over, the eyes of Herekla ranged dais and gallery for a face, which, seen but for one brief moment, had changed the current of his life.

At length he ventured to address the king. “Oh, mighty Kron, among the pleasures of this auspicious hour I perceive the greatest is yet reserved. I had hoped through your gracious condescension to be permitted on this happy occasion to offer my hand to your exalted daughter. Know, great king, that by a strange chance I have

looked upon her incomparable loveliness, and that which was anticipated as a joyful duty has become a necessity of my very existence; essential as is sunlight to vision, or air to breath."

After a momentary hesitation King Kron replied:

"At the fortunate moment when thy glances are returned, beloved prince, I doubt not my daughter's heart will follow her eyes; for surely thou art a man, the like of whom she has never seen. But for the moment that happiness must be deferred. The princess is slightly indisposed this morning, and her physician prescribes quiet."

The countenance of Herekla betrayed disappointment, but he answered cheerfully: "Most gracious king, it were in accordance with my secret hope, if I might meet the Lady Astera all unknown, even as her loveliness was revealed to me; then would I strive to win her, not as a prince demanding, but as a man suing for her favor."

This timely proposal relieved the embarrassment caused by Astera's unaccountable refusal to be presented to the foreign suitor. The king, hoping that chance might effect what his daughter so persistently denied, smiled assent, saying: "Thou art no less wise than beautiful, my son; the plan meets our approval."

“**Astera** is now in the Garden of Palms; thither shall thou repair at thy leisure. Seek an opportunity, and, untrammelled by statecraft, woo and win thy bride. The love of kings would be more constant if all princes were of thy mind.

“On the west side of the Garden a stream issues beneath a bridge; cross over, and with this key unlock the gate. Enter alone. Thou hast my seal; it will be thy passport. May good fortune attend thee.”

XXIV.

THE GARDEN OF PALMS.

*"Larger constellations burning, yellow moons and happy
skies,
Breaths of tropic shade and palms in clustering knots of
Paradise."*

WHEN Atlantis, Queen of the West, smiled from her throne on the Kronian waters, the world was young, health was in the breeze, the dew of early morn freshened the gardens, unsullied down lay upon peach and grape, the rose, as yet unspoiled by art, exhaled salubrious perfume.

There flowed the fountain of youth, there lay the land of dreams; history was not a lie, nor words a drapery wherewith to conceal thought. The eye fearlessly sought a reflection of its own fire, the language of passion kept time to the heart's rythm. Love was not then feeble impulse, nor calculating selfishness. In the heart of Herekla, it was what God originally made it—the outburst of a fire latent in every human breast, a purifying flame that dispels the vapor of lust—it was the bud of Nature's sweetest flower, whose

fragrance antidotes miasmal passion, and whose fruitage is the wealth of nations.

Sons and daughters of this weary old world, leave for a moment the dull plains of reality, where only thorns and thistles grow, cross the turbid stream of traffic and toil, close your ears to its discordant roar, forget wasting care, pain, and injustice, while you wander at will in the Garden of Palms.

XXV.

THE WINGED DREAM.

*" Young flowers were whispering love in melody
To other flowers that night, and tree to tree,
Fountains were gushing music as they fell
In shadowy grove and moonlit dell."*

As the day drew to a close, and the languor inseparable from a hot climate was mitigated by the sea-breeze, the Phenician prince went forth alone, unlocked the gate of the Garden of Palms, and stood bewildered by its enchanting beauty.

Here was a vast living arcade; the trunks of lofty fern palms, arranged with mathematical precision, were its columns, the long interlacing fronds its arches; around the trees were twined roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, carrying clusters of bright bloom to the very tops. The borders of the walks were fringed with flowers, and each intersection was made elegant by statues, columns, and other architectural designs.

On silvery ponds the flag and lily reposed. Fountains of graceful or quaint conceit flashed

ghost-like in the thickets ; rare fruits hung on the walls, and the sunny side of the enclosure was screened by hedges of cactus and aloe. A stately pavilion gleamed in the distance, and beyond, like a castle in the air, rose the tower of Kohl.

The verdure of this paradise was made perennial by streams of water flowing over painted tile.

At this hour the swans in the fountain drowsily floated to cover, belated birds nestling in the branches, murmured a sleepy good-night to each other and to departing day ; the rising moon threw shadows across the white walks—motionless, save when the night wind swept the tree-tops, and the delicate fronds trembled and rustled as with the footsteps of spirits. Now the music of eolian harps, in fitful cadence, swells and dies upon the breeze, and the perfume-laden air breathes its benison.

The gate by which Herekla entered was opposite a long walk, bordered by stately yuccas in full bloom. Transfigured by the moonbeams and quivering shadows, the tall white shafts bowed and nodded like wood-nymphs, ready to step from their bayonet pedestals at a moment's notice.

Up this weird avenue, uncertain of purpose, Herekla strayed, and, finding an arbor at its termination, entered, and soon became lost in a

reverie, which mingled with the magical surroundings.

Hitherto the energies of this great soul had been concentrated upon one object, the perfecting of navigation for a maritime people, and the opening of new marts for their commerce. In this patriotic endeavor he had achieved success, and, as a consequence, was offered the hand of the island princess. He had, as he fancied, seen this renowned maiden—himself unseen—and from that moment an element of character, unsuspected by himself, was suddenly developed. All poetry, sentiment, tenderness, and desire were warmed to vehement impulse by the fire of a tropical nature. He was environed with its glow, and, as the rosebud, expanding in sunlight and dew, blushes at discovery of its own sweetness and beauty, Herekla woke to a consciousness of unsuspected power and capacity of enjoyment. His step was elastic; his eyes beamed with unwonted lustre; his whole expression was of ecstasy.

“Is this enchantment!” he mused. “Nay, ’tis a new existence. True life is dual; how incomplete has been my own. But now I live because I love.

“The form of a goddess; eyes, the twin stars of my nativity; color, the snow of Lebanon, kissed by the setting sun; and voice, the breath of even-

ing, sighing through spice-groves ; a soul exalted, self-contained, pure.

“And this transcendent being is mine—my other self. But if she return not my love, if her heart be already given—then is she naught to me. I will have no unwilling sacrifice—the thought gives me strange pain.

“How shall I approach her and learn her mind ? By what adroit scheme compel attention to an unrecognized suitor ?

“She will not understand my speech ; but the language of love is that of nature ; it is one the whole world over.

“Aid me, oh Melkarth, friend of the young !”

A low, sweet murmur, as of song mingled with the music of the wind-harp. Was it imagination or reality ; thought or sense ?

His eyes were raised to solve the problem. Had one of the flower-sylphs alighted in the pathway ? His heart ceased to beat, for the embodiment of his dream approached the arbor.

The moonbeams illuminated a matchless form, draped in a soft, white fabric, enwrought with beetle wings, and bordered by plumage of tropic birds. The features, proud and calm, were crowned by a nimbus of golden hair. Such harmony and grace pervaded this presence, the movement and song were one. She seemed the

spirit of a bird, or winged messenger from a sinless sphere.

For a moment Herekla gazed entranced ; but, feeling the impropriety of concealment, he arose to make his proximity known.

At this instant a look of terror overspread the beautiful face, the lady shrieked, and turned to fly. With a bound Herekla reached the spot, and lo ! a coiled serpent, with swaying head and quivering body, in the act of springing upon its prey. Instinctively his sword was drawn, and, by an adroit blow, the head of the flying serpent was severed ; its body dropped at the feet of the maiden, and the danger was over.

In the sudden alarm, all ceremony was forgotten. Herekla supported the trembling girl to the arbor, and, as if she had been the acquaintance of years, exclaimed : " Remain here while I search for the mate ; these evil beasts are seldom alone."

After Herekla was satisfied that no further danger was to be apprehended, he returned to the arbor.

" I owe my life to thy ready help," said the lady ; " the poison of the cobra is swift and sure."

" I am amazed that it could be hidden in the garden ; the place is carefully searched at sunset, when it is the habit of serpents to come forth."

In the excitement of this unexpected adventure,

neither Herekla nor the lady noticed the marvelous fact that they were speaking a common language, and that every word was perfectly understood.

The princess continued : " I was rash to come hither alone ; but knowing the sacredness of this seclusion, and tiring of court restraint, I ventured to indulge in a solitary ramble.

" I met a serpent "—then looking up, with a grateful smile, she added, " and a stranger, who saved my life at the risk of his own."

" Lady," said Herekla, bowing low, " I am a stranger, but not an intruder upon the sacredness of this Eden ; I am a loyal man ; that I came hither by the king's permission this signet and ring bear witness.

" I thank the gods who sent me at a moment when I could do thee a service."

" Thanking them and thee, I will now retire."

" Lady," said Herekla, trembling with emotion, " I beseech thee, do not leave me so soon. Listen to what I have his majesty's permission to speak :

" Walking upon the terrace roof of the palace last night, I saw thee, heard thy voice in song. I love thee, beautiful one—pardon my boldness, how could I do otherwise ? And I came hither to offer the first affection of a true heart, if perchance I might seek a return."

She looked earnestly in his face, and the unerring intuition of an innocent soul prompted the answer :

“ I believe thee to be honest and true ; the act which saved my life at peril of thine own proves thee self-forgetting and brave. Among the princes of Atlantis thou hast no peer. I have seen none like thee save in dreams.”

She blushed at her own frankness, and added :
“ But a maiden should not lightly give her heart.”

“ She may permit a man to hope, if her heart be yet untrammelled.”

“ I have never loved,” she replied, smiling ;
“ more than this I cannot say, for I must leave thee.”

“ Ah, do not so cruelly deprive me of thy presence. Behold, the shadow of the arbor has not moved a span since we met, and I have so much to say.”

“ Pardon me, my lord, I must retire ; if the king confirm thy word, I will see thee on the morrow ; and now farewell !”

She rose and left the arbor, Herekla attending her. As they passed the dead body of the cobra, the princess shuddered.

“ Dost thou fear the dead beast ?” said Herekla.

“ No ; I fear a living serpent that lies in my path and thine, if thou lovest me.”

"Sweet lady, canst thou not tell me of this peril?"

"I may give thee warning of thine own. The Prince of Pirhua loved me, and although I did not return his affection, Thalok slew him!"

"Dedan spoke of that dangerous man, Thalok."

"Yes; he is the eldest of the royal family, next the king."

"Was he not punished for such a crime?"

"No; Thalok is more powerful than the king, and artful as he is strong. Yonder temple is the seat of a power, before which even the throne trembles."

"Can no combination be made to crush this power?"

"That were hopeless. He knows every word spoken in the secret chamber of the palace; the birds of the air seem to carry a voice, the elements to obey his will. It is said, and I so believe, he has dealing with evil spirits. The eyes of his servants pierce the soul.

"Seest thou the Tower of Kohl that overlooks this garden? In it is a basilisk eye that watches every movement. We must not enter the moonlight, lest we should be observed.

"How strange," she continued, musing, "I should thus confide to thee that which I have never spoken to my father or my dearest friend,

yet my heart tells me the confidence is not misplaced."

"Thy words are sweeter than thy voice, if that were possible," Herekla answered. "Thou mayst trust me, dear lady; I would give my life for thee, or to thee," he added, smiling.

"And it is so fortunate we can converse thus," said the lady. "I shall now more than ever bless my father for teaching me in infancy the language of the East."

Herekla was greatly perplexed by these words, but fearing to disturb the current of conversation by an inopportune question, made no answer. Passing through the shady walks, they emerged near the Pavilion.

"Here we must part," said the princess. "Would I might speak thy name to say farewell, yet this much I can conjecture—being Phenician in speech—thou art of the foreign embassy recently arrived, and by thy dress and lofty bearing thou art of exalted rank."

"Lady, thou hast rightly divined," said Herekla, bowing.

"If the Prince Herekla be like thee, then must my sister Astera be well pleased."

With a look of profound astonishment, Herekla exclaimed:

"Thy sister—Astera?"

“Yes; Astera, the king’s daughter, my sister by adoption, and my dear friend, the betrothed of thy Prince Herekla.”

“Oh, lady,” he cried, while his heart stood still to listen, “oh, lady, who art thou?”

“I am Atla, Gift of the Sea to Ishma, the court physician, the only parent I have ever known.”

Seeing the look of despair in his face, with sudden insight she exclaimed: “And thou—this agitation betrays the secret—thou art Herekla, Prince of Phenicia, suitor for the hand of the Lady Astera!!”

During this astonishing denouement both stood in the full moonlight, forgetful of all else but the painful misunderstanding in which they were involved.

Herekla was silent, distracted by conflicting emotions. Loyalty to his father’s wishes, his honor pledged to the king of Atlantis, the publicity of his intention in making the voyage, the ignominy of a return without the princess, all this rose before him like a black insurmountable wall. Sound policy, a noble pride, and an uncompromising sense of duty, had hitherto ruled his every thought and act, but another feeling, long repressed, now asserted sovereignty; his passionate nature clamored for recognition, and struggled to break the barriers of restraint.

He stretched out his arms, as if to embrace Atla, but the habit of self-repression turned the trembling balance.

"I *am* Herekla," he cried impetuously, "the most unhappy man the moon looks down upon. My father was filled with foreboding, the stars warned in vain. How strangely I misunderstood their meaning; I trusted Fate, by which I am outwitted and betrayed.

"Ah, love is blind and deaf, else I should not have seen in one so fair a daughter of dark Kronos; I should have recognized the miracle of my own language spoken so purely by an alien voice.

"Supposing thee to be Astera, I have given my first love—it is thine—now and forever. I will wed none but Atla; the words I have spoken will not, cannot be recalled.

"I planned to win a bride and I embrace despair!"

Then taking her hand, he said softly: "Oh, Atla, Child of the Water, art thou like the sea, unstable?"

Surprised and blushing deeply, she replied: "In calm or storm, the sea is constant to her lover, the moon; moved by its power, the tides roll round the world."

"To this sea I entrust the treasure of my love;

absent or present, living or dying, remember,
dearest Atla, I am thine. Thy words are music,
though they speak my doom; thy memory will
be my cherished sorrow, the ghost of a dead joy.

“Farewell; I go—I know not whither!”

XXVI.

IN THE CHAMBER.

*"The mind has a thousand eyes,
The heart but one ;
And the light of a whole world dies
When love is done."*

How Herekla reached his chamber in the Palace he never knew. An hour later Sardas found his master lying on his couch cold and motionless. Being unable to rouse him, Kadmon and Madai were summoned, who, in great alarm, sent for the Eastern physician. After a careful examination, Ishma pronounced this sudden illness to be in consequence of some violent shock, and by skillful appliances consciousness and speech were soon restored. Herekla's first words disclosing the cause of this unprecedented malady, startled and distressed his friends.

"Alas," he sighed, "that in one moment the heart of man should wake to love and sorrow. Grief is twinborn with joy. The strings of the lyre are broken, the chord is lost ; my feet stumbled upon the threshold of Paradise.

"I am the sport of inexorable Fate ; through its distorting mist, I fancied I saw Astera, the princess I was to make my queen. I gave my heart to this peerless maiden, who is not the daughter of the king. Her name is Atla, Child of the Sea!"

"Oh, woe, woe," said Ishma ; "what a misfortune ! The God of Shem only can save him from the rage of Thalok's jealousy."

"The error is irreparable," said Herekla. "Duty, interest, and the love of life lose their power ; even honor struggles with impulse. Dear friends, this is the decree of Fate which neither gods nor men can resist. In the upper glory I saw the shade of Atla beside my own spirit. In the next sphere, if not in this, she will be mine. Let us go hence ; there is no safety but in flight. I cannot trust myself to see her again. Rouse my servants ; there are six hours before day. We must sail at once ; leave the Moon in the basin with its mockery of nuptial gauds ; the Sun, not yet unladen, is ready for sea ; I have the king's passport.

"Hasten my friends. Why do we linger ? Away, away !"

"But King Kron, what will he think of this unceremonious flight ?" said Kadmon.

"Ishma will excuse us. Say I am ill, insane ; it is true. I may soon return, but now I must

have change and time to consider, as I cannot in this land of illusion."

While the servants hastened to execute these orders, the Arhats and Ishma held a consultation. The forecast of Kadmon amounted almost to prevision; to him the others deferred, and after a few minutes of profound reflection, he decided that the wishes of the young prince should rule. The sages then compiled a letter to the king, and Ishma, ever practical and provident, arranged for the voyage.

THE LETTER.

"TO THE NOBLE AND EXALTED KRON, LORD OF THE WESTERN WORLD.

"Thy servants Kadmon and Madai, with grateful acknowledgments of the royal favor, beseech pardon for their hasty departure.

"Our beloved master, the Prince Herekla, has been suddenly stricken by a strange malady, and after consultation with the court physician, it is deemed imperative that we put to sea for a few days, hoping by this means to restore the balance of his mind, which is seriously affected.

"We pray the urgency of the case may excuse this abrupt leave-taking from the court and country of our generous and gracious host.

"When our young master is relieved of this

malady, we will return and complete the weighty business entrusted to our care, and again lay our service and allegiance at the feet of our lord and king, whom may the gods preserve.

“KADMON,
“MADAI.”

XXVII.

ATLA AND ASTERA.

AFTER Herekla left the garden, Atla returned to the Pavilion with a heavy heart. By the strange error into which the Phenician prince had fallen, another complication was added to the net in which she was already entangled. Yet in face of this double danger Atla was conscious of a new and peculiar exaltation, and she wondered that her fears for the safety of a stranger were greater than for her own.

Concealment was impossible in so true and fearless a nature, and she resolved at once to inform Astera of the extraordinary events which had occurred during their brief separation. Yet this could not be done till morning, for she would not disturb the needed slumber into which her sister had fallen ; but as she entered the hall, Tula, who was in waiting, informed her that the princess was awake and had inquired for her.

Astera was alone, sitting in the moonlight. Her attitude and voice betrayed the deepest dejection. "Come hither, dear Atla," she said ;

“my heart will break unless thou share my sorrow. I have but this moment received a message—nay—a mandate from my father. To-morrow, so he decrees, my betrothal to the foreign prince must take place. Oh, Atla, I cannot marry this stranger and go to an unknown country. My heart for a long time has been given and my faith pledged to my cousin Zemar.”

This not altogether unexpected confession relieved Atla's embarrassment, and she answered cheerfully: “Be comforted, dear Astera; there is a possible way of escape. The strangest events have happened to-night. Surely fate is mightier than monarchs!

“When I saw thee quietly sleeping I went out for a solitary ramble in the Garden. As I strayed along the avenue of Sylphs, a sharp hiss smote upon my ear and arrested my footsteps. I turned, and to my horror, saw in the dewy grass a cobra springing out upon me. I was paralyzed through fright, a dreadful death seemed inevitable; but, quick as thought itself, a bright blade flashed in the moonlight and the severed head of the serpent fell at my feet.

“I looked up to solve the miracle of my rescue, and lo! the grandest man I have ever seen was standing before me. His dress and features indicated foreign birth and exalted rank. He proved

to be no other than the Prince Herekla, the suitor for thy hand.

“And now I must tell thee of something more wonderful than the slaying of the serpent. The prince, who was in the Garden by thy father’s permission—of this I am certain, from the ring and signet in his possession—was seeking for thee. In the confusion of the sudden alarm all ceremony was forgotten ; he supposed me to be Astera, the princess, whom he sought, and with the fiery impulse of his people, at once gave me his heart.”

“Oh, fortunate error ; auspicious mischance,” said Astera, interrupting her. “Surely the gods have interposed. Thy peril will prove my salvation. My father must relent ; he will not compel me to wed a reluctant bridegroom. Thou shalt go with me to negotiate. If thou art my ally he will deny me nothing.” Then, suddenly checking her enthusiasm, she inquired, “But canst thou love this prince, dear Atla?”

“I do not know,” Atla replied, blushing.

Early the next morning they sought the royal presence. When the usual salutations were over Astera said :

“Dear father, thou art loving and wise. May I—nay, may we—proffer a request?”

“Thy request is granted before it is made, if it be reasonable,” the king replied, cheerfully.

Thus emboldened, Astera began: "My request pertains to the Phenician prince——"

"Name him not," said the king, somewhat sternly. "There is no Phenician prince in Atlantis. He departed in the night suddenly, with scanty leave-taking, stricken by some strange malady. So say his counsellors, in this letter which I have just received. A most unaccountable proceeding. After the urgent business of the festival is over we will investigate the matter."

Astera's light sigh gave token of relief, but Atla's face paled to deadly whiteness.

XXVIII.

THE PALACE OF NIGHT.

MUSA: "*A serpent woman?*"

VARUS: "*Come and see.*"

WHILE Herekla and Atla, crowned with the nimbus of young love, walked in Paradise, Thalok perfected the last plan of his wicked conspiracy, that to which he alluded in his conference with Ciquan as "quiet and safe." One person must be taken into confidence, a person whose presence and power even dark Thalok feared.

Beneath a volcanic mountain in a grotto partly natural, but reformed by the hand of art, dwelt Kirtyah the Sorceress, daughter of Lilith, a witch woman, and Obon, a reputed serpent-father. Its hidden entrance was in the remote part of a cypress grove, esteemed by the populace too sacred for any person to enter, save the high-priest, who encouraged this convenient superstition.

When night fell upon the earth Thalok himself drove his fleet horses, Wind and Wave, to this

gloomy forest, and after securing them within its precincts, entered the hollow trunk of a tree, which rested its huge bulk against the mountain.

He made a signal, the door unclosed, and a dwarf with a lamp in his hand appeared, and conducted him through labyrinthian passages, till they emerged in a subterranean palace, or temple, hewn from the solid bed of the mountain, which burst upon the vision like a dream of enchantment.

The immense dome of this marvel of architecture was cerulean blue in color, and glittering with a similitude of the heavenly host; around its base, carved from the rock, was stretched the emblem of infinity, a great serpent, holding its tail in its mouth. The dome was supported by giant pillars, left in place by the architects; while in the centre of the vault a revolving wheel, brilliant with phosphorescent light, served the double purpose of ventilator and midnight sun to this unhallowed fane. The sides of the grand nave were tunnelled with arched openings, leading to shadowy conservatories and chambers that invited to repose. The rocky walls were softened by gorgeous tapestries, paintings, and carved reliefs; mysterious images with diamond points in their eyes, looked out from niche and alcove; perfumed

lamps suspended from the ceilings diffused a moonlight softness through the seclusion of the recesses.

Into these marble halls of night had been gathered all that pertains to luxurious living, not only magnificent decorations and household furniture, but statues single and in groups, embossed tablets, mosaics, self-luminous pictures, screens, and altars burning with fragrant incense.

A great geyser in the centre of the grotto at once warmed and beautified this marvellous palace. Graceful jets of water climbed upward to the vast dome and fell in diamond showers beneath the phosphorescent sun, or were transformed into clouds of spray, changing with rainbow hues. Around the crystal brim of the fountain, amid statues and fantastic stalagmites, were ranged flowering plants and trees, amid which fluttered singing birds and gossamer insects. Rugs of embroidery and skins of wild beasts were spread upon the mosaic pavement, and seats of various devices opened their soft arms to welcome the visitor.

Upon an ermine-covered couch, or throne, near the brink of the fountain, the mistress of this more than regal palace now reclined. She was a woman in middle life, but of extraordinary beauty. Her form was slender and graceful, her

features were regular, the color rich, the expression haughty; her hair black and waving, but dark eyes, that blazed with the least excitement, were her most startling and irresistible fascination. The man who dared that glance of glorious but deadly beauty, felt himself under a magic spell.

Kirtyah's dress was as remarkable as her person: the closely-fitting bodice was formed of golden scales, the centre of each set with an emerald; her well-poised head was crowned by a delicate crest, or hood, wrought in similar scales and enriched by two rubies that burned like the eyes of a serpent; a band of the same crimson gems encircled her neck.

A robe of woven gold draped her reclining form and fell at the side in sinuous folds, her unsleeved arm rested languidly upon a mantle made from the breasts of purple humming-birds.

Rendered drowsy by the monotonous plash of the fountain and heavy odor of flowers, as she lay with lids half closed over the glowing eyes, her whole aspect vividly recalled the strange stories connected with her birth and parentage.

Thalok's step roused her, and all signs of languor disappeared; her color came, her eyes flashed, and her lips parted, disclosing small teeth of dazzling whiteness.

She rose with infinite grace and dignity; gave

her guest greeting and motioned him to a place by her side.

As he bowed and obeyed the gesture, his eyes fell upon a barrier of trellis-work opposite, which screened a deep recess in the rock, where lay an object that unpracticed vision might have mistaken for rippling sunlight coming through some vine-curtained crevice in the dome above. Indeed, the tremulous brilliancy of its yellow hue caused Thalok instinctively to look up for a rift where sunlight might penetrate, forgetting that it was now dark night.

As he gazed, the line of light changed position, quivered and coiled itself in broad rings, from which protruded a serpent's head with vicious eyes and open jaws.

This illusive form was a dread reality, being no other than that of Lucksor, a yellow asp of great size and age, the inheritance a serpent father had bestowed upon Kirtyah—the fearful beast whose deadly powers were subservient to her magic arts.

“Lucksor is terrible,” said Thalok, awe-stricken, although himself as treacherous and deadly as the serpent.

“He is my slave,” said Kirtyah, “and thine, if thou lovest me.”

“Dost thou doubt it?” he answered. “Remember my devotion, and how I have braved the

wrath of the king for thy sake. Behold the luxury with which thou art surrounded. Is this no proof of dotting affection? And true love can never die. Hast thou not often said it?"

"If thy heart still be true, where is the token?"

"Did I forget," said the wily priest, embracing her formally. "Thou wilt forgive, when I confide to thee my errand.

"Know then, my dear Kirtyah, that grand affairs of state engross my thoughts—affairs of such grave import, that for the moment, even love and its endearments must be put aside.

"Startling events are about to transpire, requiring a cool brain and steady nerves—events in which thy fortune is involved as well as mine."

"Thou wouldst have my aid," said the sorceress, not heeding the apology.

"I cannot live without it, adorable one, of that thou art but too well aware. Wilt thou serve me?"

"I have long been at thy service; what wouldst thou at this time? Who sleeps to-night?"

"No one, foolish child; but the king must be drowsy," he added, nodding significantly.

Kirtyah started, and for a moment sat absorbed in thought: "Art thou sure this is wise, Thalok?"

"I have said," he responded firmly. "Rouse Lucksor, prepare the vapor."

“No need to rouse him, my lord; the beast is unquiet enough. His continual restlessness portends evil. For ages this mountain has slumbered; but now—mark me—trouble is brewing.”

“What mean you? Is the earthquake god at work?”

“Look, and listen,” she said, leading him to a distant part of the grotto. Here was a huge fissure into which the priest, peering cautiously, saw, in its awful depths, sulphurous flames, and heard a low muttering like the growl of savage beasts.

“I have never seen the like of this before,” said the woman, “nor has it occurred within the memory of man.

“Dear Thalok, it portends evil. Oh, take me from this dreadful place, where for so many years I have buried myself for love of thee!”

“It is nought, it is nought,” said Thalok; “the many years have made thee timid. Thou art not growing old and foolish, my Kirtyah?”

“I could better preserve both youth and courage in the fair world of light. Oh, my lord, for thy dear sake I have relinquished the blessed sunshine; I have renounced the pleasures of youth and the communion of my kind, to dwell with a serpent and to work thy will. And for this I receive nought but coldness and neglect.”

"Nothing?" cried Thalok imperiously. "Have I not lavished my wealth for thy pleasure, and all the arts of our civilization to satisfy thy caprice? Did not yon midnight sun alone absorb a thousand lives and a mountain of treasure? Have I not given thee the devotion of my manhood, and made thee partner of every interest? And do I not even at this moment confide to thee my most dangerous secret? And dost thou call this nought?"

"Is hunger appeased by memory of a feast? I crave thy present love; that only satisfies a woman's heart. The forms around me, though beautiful, are lifeless and cold."

"I love thee still," said Thalok; "and when all that I purpose is accomplished, who but thou, my enchantress, will triumph in my success and share in the fruits of victory?"

"But dost thou love no other?" said Kirtyah, desperately. "The Lady Atla's name is mentioned with thine."

Thalok turned upon the woman a fierce and startled look. Who could have betrayed him? No one, save by his order, might visit this Palace of Night. Was Kirtyah's magic more far-reaching than he imagined? But feeling the necessity of her aid in carrying out his present purpose, he forced himself to dissemble.

“Foolish one,” he answered, lightly. “Let not insane jealousy warp thy reason. For the completion of my schemes, I must obtain possession of the Princess Atla and win her confidence. The king is so besotted with love that he has given her the royal seal.”

“But thou knowest, my lord, that I can wile it from her by my art.”

“Forbear,” he cried, impatiently, “I cannot make thee understand. Atlantis is on the verge of a revolution that will startle the world. Press me no further, I have not time to explain. Trust all in my hands, and now, my Psyllah, prepare the poison.”

Kirtyah made no answer, but seemed again absorbed in thought. Thalok could form no conjecture as to the effect of his words, for her face was inscrutable.

At length, rousing herself, she motioned to the dwarf, who ran to a recess, and presently returned with a slender iron rod, upon the point of which was secured a small piece of flesh.

Meantime Kirtyah rose, and with a movement of exceeding grace, more suggestive of gliding than walking, went to a cabinet, and brought thence a musical instrument, unlike any Thalok had seen.


She now began a low, monotonous song, repeat-

ing strange words, thrumming the instrument, and rocking her body from right to left, fixing her eyes upon the serpent. The asp gazed as if enchanted, stretched himself lazily, closed his eyes and appeared to sleep.

The music changed, sharp, quick notes fell like the stroke of a hammer; Kirtyah's voice grew louder and higher the words more rapid and incomprehensible, until they ended in a piercing scream, during the prolongation of which the name of the serpent was continually invoked.

Lucksor was marvellously affected. As the music changed he opened his eyes, trembled, and crawling to the front of the den, strove to press through, but finding himself thwarted, lashed the bars furiously. As the song became more exciting he grew still more exasperated, his head swayed rapidly from side to side, he coiled himself and sprang again and again, with such violence that the slender barrier seemed about to fall.

Kirtyah now placed some dried leaves upon the rod, fired them, and waved the whole just out of the serpent's reach. The air was filled with fumes of a pungent odor, and as these penetrated his lair, the rage of the serpent was terrible. By his rapid contortions and struggles, the den seemed filled with sparks and flashes of electric



fire, his eyes were glowing coals, the forked tongue quivered, the hissing became a roar.

Suddenly the head flattened, protruded through the bars, and towered up outside the cage. The body was about to follow, when Thalok cried out : "Enough ! enough ! Give the demon his sop !"

He shuddered at the sight which followed. Kirtyah seized the writhing neck in her hand, thrust the end of the rod into the gaping mouth, and pressed the struggling reptile back into his den.

The jaws closed, opened again, and the venom was secured in its deadliest form. As the Pythoness gave the rod into Thalok's hand, he was conscious of a shock and a sharp twinge of pain.

Kirtyah then slipped one of the bars, and still retaining her grasp upon the serpent's neck, with motion rapid as his own, accommodated herself to his lessening struggles ; her left hand waved over his head, her eyes shot a strange fire, her lips moved, and a distant hum, like the whirling of swift wheels, was heard ; it grew louder and louder, till every object in the rocky temple seemed to reel, and the great stone serpent to swim round the dome as in the rush of an invading stream.

The overpowering current struck the asp—his eyes closed, his body straightened and grew rigid,

the glitter was gone, the color faded, and he lay cold, gray, inflexible as the branch of a fallen tree, over which has swept the storms of many a winter.

The sorceress now loosened her hold, and still waving her left hand, cried :

“Wither, dead stick, till the power which gives thee life is again required.”

Dropping the loosened bar into place, she retired to her laboratory, motioning Thalok to follow.

Here amid flames of consuming minerals and decoctions of deadly herbs, the venom of the asp was converted to a vapor which Kirtyah deftly secured in a crystal retort ; but not until the priest, in awkward attempt to assist, had cut his hand upon a broken glass.

“My lord,” said the sorceress, as she gave him the deadly treasure, “wilt thou have wine and song to cheer thee before thy return?”

“Not now, not now, my enchantress,” he answered, hastily. “I am in no tender mood. The work I have undertaken demands all my time and energy. Pleasure would unnerve me ; and, however reluctant, I must hasten my farewell.”

He was now in possession of the poison, and with little ceremony took his departure, promising to return when its potency had been tested.

The dwarf attended him to the door, the high-priest said farewell, passed through, and placing a bar which he had brought for the purpose, across the entrance, effectually closed it upon those within.

“Now welcome earthquake and volcanic fire,” he savagely exclaimed. “Swallow this mountain and its troublesome secret; I care not how speedily.”

With that he sprang into the chariot, and the swift steeds soon brought him to the court of the temple.

As Thalok disappeared through the door, the dwarf, who followed him, detected a peculiar sound in its closing, and tried to open it as he had usually done. It resisted his efforts, and the conviction forced itself upon his mind that his mistress and himself were intentionally imprisoned.

He ran to Kirtyah, screaming in terror: “Dear mistress, the door is fastened from without; we are both dead; the high-priest has buried us!”

Kirtyah, who had not moved from the spot where Thalok left her, smiled scornfully as she answered the terrified servant: “Am I a love-sick girl, Ikba, that Thalok can deceive or surprise? I know him better than he knows me, or himself even.

“Ungrateful wretch, he dreams not that the

pale submissive page, who bears love-tokens to the lady Atla, is no other than his forsaken Kirtyah. A change of color and costume works wonders, Ikba. Then is my head with ashes crowned, now with a flame of fire."

The dwarf looked up and saw two lambent flames curl in the rubies of the golden crest, and play above his mistress' head.

She continued speaking: "The girl abhors him; that is her salvation. Atla and Kirtyah have one common bond of sympathy. Let him work his will upon the king, who is mine enemy, I care not; but the hour of Thalok's triumph will be the hour of my revenge. The man who betrays me must perish. I loved him once; I serve him now, but for my own purpose. My passion is turned to gall—nay, to the venom of asps.

"Lucksor, thou art a lamb, a dove, a lily compared with this Thalok!"

So saying, she drew from a chest a long ladder of silken cord, and by a dextrous movement indicating practice, threw it over what appeared to be a star in the lofty vault, but was in reality a hook of steel.

"Ascend," she cried to the astonished Ikba, who nimbly ran up the slender but stout cord.

"Now push aside the wheel, and enter a passage on the right."

The dwarf obeyed, and presently returned in great glee, saying: "I have seen the blessed stars and the bay of Pirhua."

"Now thou art satisfied we are not entombed, and thy courage is restored," said Kirtyah. "I will entrust thee with another secret. Go through the cactus walk, and with this key unlock a door of the temple, which appears as but part of the tapestry covering the farther wall. There call loudly the name, Hunap."

Ikba disappeared, and soon returned, followed by a young man of superb appearance, clad in the livery of Thalok's household. He was an athlete in form, imperious in bearing, but his manner softened as he approached Kirtyah.

He bowed humbly, saying: "When my master ordered Wind and Wave yoked to the chariot, I easily divined whither they would carry him, and I hastened after, thinking I might be of service."

"The intuitions of love are unerring, my Hunap," said the sorceress, giving him her hand; "thou hast come in good time. The fates are like thy steeds, fleet-footed and sure. The crisis is near. Now thou canst prove thy loyalty."

Hunap pressed the hand he still held, saying: "I will prove my truth and devotion, if need be, with my life."

"I cannot doubt thee," she answered. "Yet if

life be imperilled, my Hunap shall not take the hazard alone.

“And now, what tidings from the palace? Thou knowest, under pretence of illness, I have been self-banished from court since the arrival of the foreign embassy. Hast thou seen the Phenician prince?”

“His reception took place this morning in the Hall of the God, all the court in attendance. Prince Herekla is a grand person; he has taken every heart by storm.”

“Including that of the Princess Astera?”

“Nay, strange to tell; neither the princess nor the lady Atla appeared; their absence excites much comment.”

“I believe I can fathom the mystery. Hast thou seen the lady Atla since my departure?”

“I have only heard her voice. After the repulse of Thalok, to which thou wert witness, I sought the presence of my master and humbly offered my service, if he would go forth in the chariot, as is his wont in the cool of the day. With blackest visage and sternest words he bade me leave him. Perceiving that further parley would be unwise, I went forth to my own lodgings, and when passing the garden, I heard the voice of the lady Atla singing in the grotto of the Great Fountain. The strain was melancholy as

that of a doomed captive. Believe me, dear Kirtyah, the maiden is in deadly peril."

"She shall be protected; I have sworn it," the sorceress replied. "Thinkest thou I am jealous? Nay, nay, my friend; 'tis some diviner impulse. It may be penitence for myself or pity for another that moves me. I only know this maiden, no less beautiful than pure, must be saved, and that by Kirtyah the sorceress.

"But come with me. I have that to say which should not be overheard, and Ikba, though a dullard, hath ears."

Kirtyah then withdrew to the laboratory, accompanied by Hunap. Here she confided to him the results of her interview with Thalok, also her own plan of action in certain contingencies in which the charioteer was to perform a principal part. After a few moments of earnest consultation, Hunap took leave, fearing his absence might be discovered by his master.

After he had departed, Kirtyah gathered the drops that had fallen from Thalok's wounded hand and folded them carefully in a scarf he had thrown off and forgotten. She then went to the cage of Lucksor, lingered a moment to contemplate the venomous beast, and with an exultant smile, as she remembered the habits and instincts of the asp, sought her couch.

At midnight the high-priest gave his horses to a groom, and, after securing his deadly treasure, hastened to the tower of Kohl, and carefully scrutinized a tablet that reflected the Garden of Palms. Thereon, impressed by some lunar chemistry, were two figures, easily recognized as those of Atla and Herekla, standing near the Star Pavilion.

"Ha!" said the priest, grinding his teeth; "sits the wind in that direction? It may increase to a tornado, that will sweep our fine prince into the sea!"

At dawn, when the ship of Herekla was passing the mole of Pirhua, Ciquan found Thalok in a thicket near the gateway of the garden; his haggard features bore witness to a night of anxious watching.

"I left the vault of the Quenchless Lamp at midnight, to bring important tidings," said Ciquan, with a sneer, "and during all these hours have sought thee in vain."

Examining the point of his dagger, Thalok answered, sullenly: "And I have waited all night for the Phenician to leave the garden."

"And the prince," Ciquan retorted, "is by this time under full sail outside the harbor of Pirhua!"

XXIX.

THE FEAST OF RAYNIR.

*"The sun has crossed the tropic line,
He rests at Aries' double bars,
And tempest-beaten dimly shines
In stormy Libra's triple stars."*

THE great event of the year, to the Atlanteans, was the Feast of the Sun-serpent, celebrated at the midsummer Solstice, which was also the king's fête day. An unusual display had been ordered for the present occasion; partly to gratify the luxurious tendencies of the age, and partly to impress the distinguished foreigners, now so unfortunately absent.

The morning of the great day opened auspiciously, and, as the monarch, in the Hall of the God, awaited the pageant that was to inaugurate the ceremonies, a messenger announced the coming of Astera and Atla. King Kron welcomed them with a smile. After the birthday gifts and good wishes were offered, he embraced them, as

had been his habit from their infancy, and, throwing an arm around each, playfully drew them to a place upon the throne.

At this moment the blare of trumpets and tramp of armed men resounded through the hall, and the procession that was to escort the king to the teocalli entered the archway.

In advance were the Chatzes, sacrificial executioners, in blood-red uniform, with Thalok the high-priest, at their head. His fierce eyes blazed with jealousy as he perceived Atla seated on the right hand of the king, and it was observed that when all others made obeisance, he bowed not, but muttered: "Our lord forgets the business of the day."

* * * * *

The Atlantean world was already assembled to witness a spectacle of unprecedented grandeur. Garden and grove, terrace and balcony were thronged with gaily-dressed spectators, eager to view the gorgeous pageant. First came an effigy of the Sea-god, founder of the kingdom, seated in a scallop car drawn by elephants; next was a colossal image of the Serpent, with a sun crest on his head; to this car was attached a team of eight black-maned lions, whose roaring echoed the bel-low of the goaded elephants. These were followed by the chariots of the king, princes, and nobles,

vying with each other in curious shape and magnificent blazonry. Behind these marched the soldiers, and, lastly, surrounded by the Chatze guard, came the victims that were this day to be immolated.

These consisted of ten white bulls, wreathed in garlands, and a hundred human beings, captives from distant lands—for the Serpent deity was supposed to delight in the sacrifice of men and women.

As the glittering pageant streamed down the broad avenues of the city, the high walls on either side reverberated with the roar and bellow of chained beasts. The noise was increased by the mournful lowing of cattle, the wail of the captives, mingled with the clangor of trumpet, gong, and drum, making a pandemonium intolerable to uninitiated ears, but pleasing to the vitiated taste of an Atlantean assemblage.

After passing through the principal thoroughfares, the procession turned into the grand avenue and paused in front of the teocalli. A breathless silence pervaded the expectant throng, every ear was attentive, every eye was fixed upon the great temple, where was to be witnessed a public exhibition of the mysteries, a transformation scene by daylight, in the open air.

Suddenly a loud detonation shook the city, and

a vast, white cumulus cloud burst from the roof of the Tower of Kohl. Majestically it ascended, climbed higher and higher, as if aspiring to the ethereal vault. For a moment it hung suspended in the sky, then separated into seven parts, which, bending outward and downward, seemed to condense slowly from vapor to crystal water-drops, through which innumerable rainbows played. As the showers descended they became still more condensed, and seven glittering cascades poured their treasures over the tower, these gradually grew less in height and greater in volume, sinking lower and lower till at length, when the level of the roof was reached, there appeared nought but a sparkling summer sea, heaving in long, slow undulations. Then upon the vast stretch of these phantom waves a great commotion took place—thunder, lightning, smoke and flame burst forth; the water hissed and seethed, and from a vapor black as night blazed forth the golden chariot of Poseidon, drawn by dolphins and driven by the god, whose free arm encircled the form of his companion, the beautiful Kleita. Simultaneously with their appearance the storm passed, the water grew calm. Above them hovered winged cupids, around floated sea-nymphs, while to the sound of aerial music the phantasmal pageant slowly sailed across the illusive sea,

grew more distant, dim, and cloud-like, till it faded into thin air. No accident marred the perfect illusion of this wonderful exhibition, and for several moments after it had entirely disappeared, the spectators remained in rapt astonishment.

Agreeably to time-honored usage, the ladies of the court then retired ; the procession moved on, and, like a huge serpent, wound its course up the broad stairway of the seven terraces, through the open portals of the temple, pausing before the inscribed pillar of the adytum, where the white bulls were slain and their bodies burned upon the altar.

Here the oracle was received, the voice coming from beneath the altar. The words were as usual, ambiguous, and in this instance also alarming.

“WHEN THE STEM OF THE LILY IS BROKEN,
THE FLOWERS WILL PERISH.”

Thalok was startled ; the voice and words were not what he expected ; being an adept in knowledge of the elementals, he was painfully conscious of adverse currents. Who had dared to tamper with his arrangements ? He scrutinized the crevice in the altar from whence the sound proceeded. Were his eyes at fault or did he perceive a flash within the dark chamber, a shifting scintillation that recalled a scene he had recently witnessed in

the grotto of the sorceress? He would send a spy at once and ascertain if the seal upon the door of the cavern were broken. But before an opportunity was found for carrying out this purpose, an event occurred that drove the circumstance from his mind.

At the words of the oracle, the countenance of the king also grew troubled. He strove to interpret its meaning. "If the stem of the Lily be broken." To his doting affection there was but one "Lily" in the world—Atla, fairest of the daughters of men. "The stem" must be the royal favor and support, that could not be wanting while Kron lived. He fixed his penetrating eyes on Thalok, and the shadow on his face darkened as the train left the temple and passed on through the court to the highest terrace, where a pavilion for the use of royalty had been erected opposite the stone altar Vyaka and the funeral pyre.

Among the captives about to be immolated were two persons round whom centred the chief interest of this dreadful occasion, Azan, a young man, and Zagra, his betrothed. These unfortunates, who were possessed of extraordinary beauty and were of exalted rank in their own country, had been captured by Atlantean pirates during a war with the cliff-dwellers of the north, waged

for the very purpose of supplying the annual sacrifice.

The melancholy of their sad fate during the months of mocking preparation was only mitigated by the knowledge that they might die together.

These victims were not to fall ignobly under the knives of the Chatzes, but by the hand of Thalok and the priests of the seven luminaries.

The king and nobles were seated, soldiers and officers stood on the right, the captives and their implacable guard on the left; the crowd, in hushed expectation, waited below; while over all the glorious light of a midsummer sun was shining.

The dial on the tower of the temple marked the appointed moment, the fatal trumpet sounded. Azan and Zagra walked slowly toward the altar, casting aside garlands, ornaments, and broken musical instruments, and in wild despair chanting their own death-song.

“ Another glance, oh saddest eyes,
O'er the fair earth, the bending skies,
And eager crowd who wait beneath
To hear the warning trumpet's breath
That summons us to die !
Sweet breeze, waft to our northern home
A sad farewell.
The shame and anguish of our doom
Do not reveal.

“Hark ! 'tis the signal-note of death ;
It stills the heart, it stops the breath ;
Dim grows the sun's unpitying glare,
Dull hiss the serpents in their lair,
The fatal moments fly.
Clasped in a cold embrace, the last,
Love's agony will soon be past
And hushed our latest sigh.”

As their voices died away, Azan threw his strong arms round the trembling form of his companion ; there was a stifled groan ; they shuddered, and sank together upon the marble steps of the altar. As the prostrate forms remained motionless, the attending priests lifted them, gazed in their faces, and uttered a shriek of horror.

Azan and Zagra were dead !

A slender double-pointed shaft, skillfully concealed in Zagra's luxuriant tresses, had unobserved been placed between them and the resolute embrace of Azan had in one breath forever stilled each beating heart.

Thalok, who stood with uplifted knife, was first to comprehend the nature of the calamity ; with quick sagacity he foresaw the consequence upon the superstitious crowd, and springing forward, by violent words recalled the senses of the stupefied priests, himself dragged the bodies to the altar, tore out their yet warm hearts, and held them aloft toward the sun.

But now a low breathing music was heard, a mournful wail, that rose and fell in smothered cadence. Then, from an opening in the terrace, as from a subterranean cave, emerged the Vestal Band, the twelve virgins to whose care was entrusted the sacred flame ordinarily used to ignite the funeral pyre. Their tresses were dishevelled, their garments rent, ashes were scattered upon their heads, the lamps in their hands were lustreless and inverted.

As they emerged into the sunlight they beat their breasts and shrieked, in frantic tones :

“ The Quenchless Lamp is dead ;
There is no Sacred Fire.
Oh, presage wondrous, dread,
We saw its flame expire ! ”

Those who heard and understood were horror-stricken, but the courage of Thalok was not daunted.

“ Weak fools ! ” he scornfully cried. “ Know ye not I have power to rekindle the sacred flame ? Behold the magic lens that can draw fire from reluctant heaven. ”

So saying he tore off the sacred bracelet and raising it aloft, directed the burning focus upon the heaped combustibles.

But now appeared a more dreadful omen, before

which even his stout heart quailed. The lens concentrated no light or heat-giving rays !

Absorbed in the unprecedented events which had just taken place, Thalok had not noticed what more calm observers had uneasily perceived. Although no cloud darkened heaven, the noontide sun was surely growing dim. He glanced upward, and to his inexpressible dismay saw a black object slowly encroaching upon its disk and blotting out its light.

He turned to earth ; a lurid gloom overspread the landscape, familiar objects were strangely indistinct. In the dreadful noonday twilight the upturned faces of the terrified multitude grew livid, like those of men long dead. The brute creation slunk to cover with suppressed moans, dogs looked at the sky and howled, birds screeched and fluttered to their nests, vegetation drooped, not a blade of grass or a leaf quivered.

And now a deep crimson shadow like a blood-stain fell upon the distant sea ; with undeviating rush it swept across the water, invaded the land and struck the breathless city. It passed—a sickly green hue succeeded—then the air curdled to transpicuous blackness. In the unnatural dusk men gazed upon each other in horror ; they would have fled—but whither ? They turned from the livid faces around them to the lurid twilight on

land and sea, and thence to the darkened dome above. Oh, fearful sight! the stars were out. Strangely distinct in the black vault, a sword-shaped comet hung over the sun, and the great star Mazzaroth blazed forth from midday darkness!

The air grew chill, the wings of death overshadowed creation; in the brooding silence men heard the throb of their own hearts; breathing was suspended as in dread of something more awful still.

It came—a shudder—a roar—an earthquake jarred the land and rumbled away into the sea.

The eclipse was as unexpected as it was appalling, for the Atlanteans were far behind the Orientals in astrological science. But although Thalok was for a moment paralyzed, he soon recovered his self-possession. He was a man of unbounded courage and vast resource, and knowing the phenomenon would last but an instant longer, he shrewdly determined to use this misadventure for his own purpose.

“The god is angry at the self-immolation of the victims!” he shouted. “The sacrifice must be greater.”

Then turning to the stupefied Chatzes, he roared:

“To your work! to your work! Cut down the captives and the Vestals through whose neglect

these dire calamities have befallen us. Let blood flow to slake the vengeance of the Serpent ! ”

Thus inflamed, the executioners, led by Ciquan, rushed upon the unhappy victims, and frenzied by the unnatural darkness, the infernal butchery, the groans of the men and shrieks of the murdered virgins, they struck blindly at each other and at the terrified crowd. The panic was becoming general ; the throng pressed toward the royal pavilion in a wild hope of protection, and Thalok, who had roused this deadly fray, saw with secret satisfaction that the lives of the king and Prince Zemar were endangered.

Kron, who had conducted many a battle, also perceived the danger, and rising in majesty he signalled the royal archers, thundering out his orders :

“ Let go the arrows ! Shoot the foremost of the murderers ! Put an end to this insane slaughter ! ”

The archers sprang forward, the sharp twang of a thousand bowstrings was heard, a shower of arrows hustled through the gloom, and Thalok, gnashing his teeth in rage, saw Ciquan and the three assassins who were that night to assault the palace, fall to the ground.

The panic was stayed, but when the sun burst forth again his unvailed splendor disclosed a

ghastly spectacle of carnage and death. The pomp and glory of this ill-omened festival had departed ; with sinking hearts and grave forebodings the vast assembly dispersed.

The evening banquet was spiritless as a funeral feast, the shadow of a dreadful disaster hung over the guests, and at an early hour the king retired to the privacy of his own apartments.

XXX.

THE VAULT OF THE QUENCHED LAMP.

"A black slave walked behind the pageant, proclaiming, in a mournful voice: 'Even the king must die—must die.'"

IN the subterranean vault of the now Quenched Lamp, the conspirator sat alone. The Sun of the Crypt hung black; a feeble candle scarcely served to make the darkness visible. No faintest click issued from the auditory tubes; after the tumult of the day, a night of awful calm succeeded.

Thalok sat alone and pondered. The art of relighting the quintuple wick was hopelessly lost; vengeance had done its worst upon the unfortunates to whose neglect he attributed its extinction; he recalled their cruel death without a pang; for the panic and slaughter he felt neither regret nor remorse.

But at the thought of Ciquan and the chosen assassins he shuddered and buried his face in his hands—not from weak sorrow for their fate—no puerile grief or womanish sympathy melted that

stony heart. Thalok had lost his pliant tools, the accomplices and executors of his diabolical conspiracy. Ciquan and his ruffians were dead—that perhaps after all was well—none could now betray him. But they were slain by the royal archers—at the king's command. Thalok was foiled, and the cause of his failure, Kron, the king of Atlantis, the lover of Atla, still lived!

The passions of jealousy and revenge warmed his benumbed faculties into action. He sprang up with renewed energy, surveyed the parapet in the dome of the Crypt, and saw with exultation his star in the ascendant. He glanced mechanically at the place formerly occupied by Ciquan; hesitated as if for an approving nod, then went to a closed niche, took from it the phial of the sorceress and pushed with all his strength against a massive stone in the wall. It yielded to his efforts, and, turning slowly upon a pivot, disclosed naught but vacant darkness.

Thalok took the dim candle, stepped within, and, closing the heavy barrier, disappeared.

* * * * *

The hours of night went by; sunrise smiled upon the city of Atlan; the buzz of industry and the roar of commerce again filled its streets; but in the palace of Hesper an unbroken stillness prevailed, for the slumbers of the monarch were

protracted. As day advanced surprise at this unusual somnolence increased to apprehension, and, after consultation among the household-officials, Tamitz, a confidential servant, cautiously entered the chamber.

The shriek which followed drew the waiting attendants into the apartment. Tamitz had fallen senseless to the floor. A sickening odor, dissipated by the draught of air, was perceptible, and upon the couch lay the majestic form of the monarch in the rigid repose of the dead. His features were, as they had been in life, grave and tranquil; not a muscle was distorted, not a mark of convulsion visible.

King Kron, the mighty, had passed without a shock, out of the land of dreams to that undiscovered country from which neither king nor subject ever returns.

The royal physician was summoned, but all in vain. The palace was thrown into confusion; a signal, used only upon similar occasions, announced to the startled city the death of the sovereign. The temple of Kohl caught the sound and for hours echoed the solemn tone that said to each listener, "Even kings must die!"

Thalok, who nervously waited for the signal, hastened at once to the palace. To a careless observer, his worn and anxious expression might

have indicated grief, as by virtue of seniority he took command. By his masterly tact order was soon restored, the body of his brother, arranged in royal robes, was laid in the Hall of the God, guarded by soldiers, and the embalmers were enjoined to prepare for their office. He repeated in mournful voice the words of the oracle, and insinuated that the death of the king was due to the vengeance of the deities so grossly insulted at the sacrifice.

Preparation for the obsequies would consume several days and Thalok immediately assembled the ten princes, now so conveniently at hand, and proposed to elect a regent, that the government might not suffer for want of a head. It was observed with surprise that Prince Zemar did not appear at this convention of nobles.

According to Atlantean law, the high-priest would be the successor of his brother if there should be no male issue in the direct line, that is, if the princess Astera should never become the mother of a son. Although she was during her minority eligible to the office of the regency so coveted by Thalok, none of the princes ventured to propose her name, knowing the desperate character of the man with whom they were dealing, and that their own continued supremacy depended upon unquestioning acquiescence in his wishes;

therefore the proposition that the high-priest should be appointed regent with the crown and title of king, received unanimous assent.

A private coronation then took place, the crown and sceptre were transferred to Thalok at once, for the princes were in haste to leave a spot so fatal. •

Thus it happened that the band of official mourners, who at noontide paraded the streets in sackcloth and ashes, crying: "The king is dead!" that same evening shouted with joyful voice: "Long live our master, Thalok the King!"

XXXI.

IN THE PAVILION.

*"Falling leaf and fading tree,
Lines of white in a sullen sea,
Shadows rising on you and me."*

WHEN the court physician saw that his services were no longer required in the chamber of death, he hastened to anticipate any injudicious messenger who might convey to the princesses intelligence of their irreparable loss.

He found them taking their morning repast in the Rose Arbor of the Garden with Zemar, an invited guest. Their happy young faces, framed by the arched doorway of roses, presented such a contrast to the scene he had just witnessed, that, overcome by emotion, he sank speechless upon a seat outside the arbor. They hastened to his assistance, perceiving at once that he was the bearer of evil tidings. With reluctant lips he faltered forth the story, confirmed on the instant by the solemn booming of the death-signal.

Astera would have flown to the chamber of her father, but by gentle restraint she was conveyed

to the Pavilion, where her friends strove to calm her grief and their own scarcely less violent. A sense of danger mingled with their sorrow. By this untoward and shocking event the situation, already so perplexing, had become positively alarming. They had lost a powerful friend and must inevitably fall into hands of the unscrupulous tyrant who would succeed him.

After a general consultation, Atla took her foster-father aside and confided to him the story of her stormy interview with the high-priest.

"I had hoped to pass the ordeal alone and spare thee any knowledge of this complication," she said, "but since the dreadful event of this morning, further concealment would be criminal. By a necessity forced upon me I have made this powerful prince mine enemy, but indeed I could do no otherwise; I could not marry Thalok."

"Oh, Atla," the sage replied, "beauty is a misfortune and a snare, yet I would not have thee other than thou art; union with Thalok would be worse than death, my child, my dearest friend."

"Dear father," she rejoined cheerfully, "I speak of my unfortunate relation to the high-priest, not that I fear him, but because all these circumstances must be taken into consideration in deciding our future course. I beseech you do not give yourself anxiety on my account; there is One who

can thwart and conquer even proud Thalok, and this One will come at my call."

"Who is this powerful friend, my Atla?"

"It is the conqueror Death!" she solemnly replied.

Ishma shuddered, and placing his arm round her slight form as if to shield her, said :

"There is another friend, my child, more potent still. One who controls even the issues of life and death."

"Who is he, dear father?"

"My God and thine!"

Both were silent a moment absorbed in thought or prayer, then Ishma spoke :

"If immediate danger threatens, remember the false panel and the hollow wall; there secret thyself till I come again. Meantime remain quietly in this place; I will send a message in cypher, if occasion should require."

As the prince and physician were about to retire and arrange a definite plan of action, Astera rose in great agitation and, throwing her arms around Zemar, cried out: "My father is no more; the cause of his death is unknown. Zemar, thou must remain with me; I cannot have thee beyond my sight; I shall die if evil befalls thee."

Then, as if ashamed of this sudden weakness she put him from her gently, saying :

“Art thou well armed, my Zemar?”

“I always carry weapons,” he replied, embracing her affectionately; “but my dearest Astera has almost disarmed me by her fears. I must leave thee for the moment to complete some necessary arrangements with the few faithful servants Thalok has not corrupted, after which I will return. But if I am sooner needed, send a message to the chamber of Ishma. Beloved, farewell.”

XXXII.

THE OPAL.

*“Ch, talisman of weal or woe,
Oh, wondrous gem, thy magic glow
Is heaven’s own fire.”*

As Zemar left the room Astera turned to her friend with a troubled look and said: “Was I unqueenly or unmaidenly, Atla? I know not why it is thus, but I am distressed for more than the death of my beloved father; I have a dread of other and still greater misfortune.

“Dost thou believe in the magic power of gems? Look then upon this opal, a gem held sacred in the family of the high-priest for thousands of years. Zemar entrusted it to my care, charging me to wear it always next my heart.

“It was found in some far-off land ages ago, and it is believed that just before the great deluge an angel brought it from the sun to propitiate the favor of a mortal maid. It is also said that upon the borders of our beautiful lake he prepared a paradise for her dwelling-place. From this angel

our palace derives its name. But his love was rejected, because it was sinful.

"The story, I think, is a fable, hiding some mystery, for the angel was Hesper, Star of the West, and the name of the maiden was Seola, a word which means the soul."

"That name," said Atla, "how strangely it moves me. I cannot have heard it before. And yet, when it is spoken, dim memories like ghosts arise. Perhaps among my ancestry there may have been some—— But it is useless to form conjectures, my origin is involved in impenetrable mystery. All life, dear sister, is a mystery. But I interrupt you."

"This glorious gem," Astera resumed, "if what men assert be true, has power to protect loved ones from evil. It also warns of approaching danger. How flashed the scintillations from its heart of fire! How glowed the shifting waves of rainbow light!

"Behold it now, pale and faded! The lustre quenched, the color dimmed; dull as a pebble on the sea-vexed shore.

"What does this change portend? I fear some serious peril threatens; there is a shadow in the way, a shadow invisible to human eyes, but which so intercepts the light of heaven it cannot reach the sunborn opal. For myself I care little. But

tell me, my Atla, thou hast the gift of prophecy, does any disaster threaten the life of my cousin Zemar?"

Atla pressed the hand of the trembling girl and after a long silence spoke.

"The shadow hangs over my path also, dear sister, we must pass through it together. But be comforted. Afar off I see Zemar crowned right royally, standing in the sunlight.

"And I have seen more than this. Dost thou remember the evening when, sitting by the great fountain, I proposed that we go to the Hanging Gardens because the air was close and methought I saw phantoms?"

"Yes, I well remember. It was the day of the Phenicians' arrival. I was distracted with apprehension, I fancied thou wert distraught also."

"Well, now I must tell thee what happened that night. Thy uncle, Thalok, came to visit me when I was alone in the balcony. He came uninvited and unannounced. No need to repeat what passed—but he left the place in a transport of smothered rage. Knowing he would not return, at least for a few hours, I went forth to quiet my spirit and form some plan for the future. While I sat by the fountain a warning vision passed before me. I heard solemn voices that curdled my blood saying, 'Depart, depart! Woe, woe!'"

“Whence came this mysterious vision, these warning voices?”

“If it be true, dear Astera, that I am possessed of a prophetic gift, some dread event is impending. We, or I at least, must ‘depart’ from this place.”

“The gods forbid that thou shouldst leave me,” Astera replied warmly. “Thou shalt not depart alone, I will be thy companion!”

The words were scarcely finished when the ounce, which had been quietly lying by Astera’s side, sprung up from sleep, broke his leash, tore madly round the room and bounded through the open door. Astera flew after him, for no hand but hers could restrain his rage.

He ran swiftly along the garden path, sniffing the ground and air by turns and snarling viciously. Astera threw the leash over his head, cautiously checked his violence and by voice and gesture drew him to her side, at the same time offering a confection, of which he was fond.

“Yundza! Yundza!” she cried, patting his head and soothing him, “thou art getting dangerous. Art mad? If these wild pranks are repeated thou must submit to the muzzle, a disgrace to such a glorious animal. Come in, good fellow. Be quiet upon the mat till evening and thou shalt have a bird for supper.”

Then turning to Atla, she said: "I wonder at the beast. He has never behaved thus until recently. For two days past he has been restless and savage, starting without apparent cause, growling and whining as if he saw or heard a ghost.

"Can it be possible that Yundza perceives that which is hidden from our sense?"

XXXIII.

UNCERTAINTY.

*"The waters have a crimson glow,
The hours are breathing faint and low."*

MEANWHILE the young prince and the physician hastened through the deserted walks and silent corridors till the apartments of Ishma were reached. When they were alone Zemar exclaimed: "Oh, my friend, what can be done in this unlooked-for emergency? Our position is most critical; danger is imminent."

"I would gladly forfeit the poor remnant of my days," the sage replied, "to save the young lives I hold so dear; but the sacrifice would avail nothing, we are in the grasp of an enemy who can destroy us at will.

"Yet we must not yield supinely, every expedient to save ourselves must be tried. Thalok, no doubt, will defer the consummation of his conspiracy until the obsequies of the king are solemnized; he will not dare another desperate crime so close upon the mysterious death of his brother.

Meantime the problem may be solved in an unexpected manner. Last night, while seeking wisdom in prayer, I discovered a strange sign in heaven. What mean the celestial omens? They are without precedent since the days of King Nanachus, when the world was destroyed by a flood."

"Flood and fire," said Zemar, despondingly; "these are the weapons with which the gods pursue helpless mortals."

"Say not the gods," Ishma replied, in solemn voice; "there is but one God, and He, by law immutable, punishes sin and rewards righteousness."

"But, my friend, do not the wicked prosper, are not the innocent sacrificed?"

"In the end justice will certainly triumph; but, my Zemar, with our limited vision we see not the end."

"That is a comfortless answer," the young man replied, "when danger presses so closely, when the sword hangs over our heads. Yet here I make a vow: if the plotters are overwhelmed, and the innocent are saved, I will be the servant of thy God forever."

"My son," said Ishma, "do not make conditions with a Being of infinite wisdom. Notwithstanding this error, I pray God may accept thy vow."

"It is true Thalok thus far apparently prospers. He scruples at no crime to accomplish his purpose. He suborns prince and judge, he clears the path of ambition and self-indulgence by the dagger and poison, he has the intellect and will of a demi-god with the heart of a fiend. But there is one stronger than Thalok, whose law, slow but certain, will sooner or later overtake him."

"Ishma, may not another be a sword in the hand of thy God, and turn against himself the weapons Thalok uses so effectually?"

"Oh, no! we should thus make ourselves assassins, breaking one law to fulfill another; that should not be; but we may, we must, go armed in self-defence."

"I have been armed for many a day, yet have never struck a blow, and now that the crisis has come, what can I accomplish by further inaction?"

"I have a plan by which Thalok may be convicted of a crime that even the princes of Atlantis will not condone."

"But this requires work in the laboratory. There was a dark stain on the pillow where King Kron met his doom. He died no natural death. Perhaps I can detect and aid in the conviction of the murderer. Alas, we have fallen on evil times; the heavens frown, the earth trembles; if the foreign astrologers err not, some dreadful crisis is

near. Having no charts or data in this country by which to reckon, I have lost the ability for accurate calculations, but I know this much, the position of the heavenly bodies is alarming. We must decide upon our course of action without delay.

“Wilt thou go with me into the laboratory, my Zemar?”

As the prince was about to comply, a servant appeared, with a request that he should go immediately to the Lady Astera, who was now in her own apartments in the palace. Somewhat surprised at this sudden recall, Zemar bade the physician farewell and hastened after the messenger.

During the remainder of the day Ishma wrought among the chemicals, and at last detected in the dark substance that had fallen on the king's pillow, the virus of a serpent.

So absorbed did he become in this investigation that he listened to the monotonous boom of the death-signal as in a dream and scarcely noticed the wail of the mourners passing the palace. But when evening drew on and increasing shadows drove him to the open window, he was startled by the cry:

“Long live our master, Thalok the King!”

This was amazing! the king not yet entombed,

and his successor already proclaimed ! such precipitation was without precedent in the annals of the nation.

Why this indecent haste, unless to forestall inquiry as to the mysterious death of King Kron and prevent any exposure the penetration and skill of the eastern sage might threaten ?

XXXIV.

THE FLIGHT.

*"Signs in heaven and signs on earth,
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke."*

GREATLY perplexed, Ishma went out upon the balcony, striving to solve the obscure problem. The strange star again burned in the northern sky; a luminous haze pervaded the lower atmosphere and reflected in the placid waters of Ziclan, lo! the young moon with the evening star in her arms; Ashteroth hangs in the cusp! A rush of memory brought the hot blood to Ishma's face, as he saw before him the realization of his vision on the night of Astera's birth.

"My dream! my dream!" he exclaimed; "for Astera this is the hour of fate; that of her friend no doubt is involved. How shall I interpret the heaven-sent warning? I must consult the prince."

He turned and met his trusty servant Zapta, who that moment entered the chamber and presented him with a silken roll. "Good master," he said, "this message admits of no delay. Zilba

of the glittering eye, page to the King Thalok, bade me place the scroll in thy hand, and in no other. He waits without, to interpret or enforce the meaning, if that be necessary."

Ishma opened the scroll. Thereon was depicted a serpent holding a star within his jaws; a flame issued from his crest, and above it was a sacred vessel, from which a column of steam issued. Beneath were these words:

"FLY! THIS FROM KIRTYAH."

Who was Kirtyah? Ishma pondered; that question he could not answer, but his perceptions quickened by alarm, gave him at once a clue to the hieroglyph. The serpent was the high-priest of the Sun—the star within his deadly fangs was Astera—the chalice and the boiling water—what were they? Water? It must mean Atla wasting in the fire of Thalok's passion. All this was clear.

"Fly!" Whither? The doubt was distracting, decision imperative. Seeing the servant still waiting, a sudden inspiration prompted the question.

"Zapta!"

"Master!"

"What ships lie in the basin of Atlan?"

"None, my lord, save the Eastern vessel called the Moon."

"The Moon," said Ishma, suddenly illuminated.
"Should not the Star be in its keeping?"

"Zapta, go swiftly to the chamber of thy mistress in the Palace, and tell the ladies Astera and Atla that they are to prepare for a long journey."

"My lord, the ladies are not in the Palace."

"What sayest thou—not in the Palace? Where are they?"

"Still at the Star Pavilion, my lord."

"This is unaccountable. A messenger from Astera called Zemar to her rooms in the Palace six hours ago."

"Zapta, listen to my orders; observe the utmost secrecy. Go swiftly to the Garden and deliver this message. Pause not on the way, nor speak to any."

He placed in the hands of the servant a tablet on which he had engraved a number of peculiar figures. "Give this," he added, "to the Princess Atla; she will read it and send me a token. Hasten your return; life and death hang in the balance."

Zapta sped breathless through the twilight and delivered the message. Atla read, grew pale, and springing to her feet called to her sister. She explained the significance of the hieroglyphs, and drawing a line across them returned the tablet to the servant, who departed as silently as he came.

The cypher arranged by Atla and her father, known to them alone, read thus: "The crisis has come. Prepare for a long absence. Chariots will meet you at the gate of the Garden. I will summon Zemar."

Confidence in Ishma had been the habit of her life; and had she not also received a supernatural warning? No questions were asked; fear quickened every movement, and in the briefest possible time the party stood in the shadow of the gate listening for the rumble of the chariots.

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When Ishma ascertained that the princesses had not arrived at the Palace, he concluded there was a mistake in the message of the morning, and that Zemar had joined them at the Star Pavilion, where he would learn of the abrupt turn affairs had taken; but to prevent the possibility of failure, he called Salza, another faithful servant, bade him search diligently for the prince and deliver a message, advising that he go directly to the harbor and meet the party who would soon arrive.

This done he paused a moment to review the situation. "The risk is fearful," thought he, "but there is no alternative. Thalok may summon us at any moment.

"The warning of the mysterious Kirtyah and the extraordinary fulfillment of my dream, are

admonitions from heaven—they cannot be misinterpreted. The new moon is just setting, darkness will favor our flight; and yet, if we are surprised—— The lives of these young innocents hang upon my decision. I tremble at the responsibility. I doubt my own judgment.”

He hesitated, and again went to the open window. Upon the mountain slope opposite, a broad field of poppies had been sown in the spring-time, among the seeds of which had been inadvertently scattered those of the asphodel. The flaming poppies had opened on the day previous to the fatal Feast of Raynir, and Ishma had watched with interest for the effect of the white blossoms which would soon appear in untutored shape among the blood-red flowers.

The fading glow of sunset lingering upon this brilliant patch of color, caught Ishma's eye. The asphodels had suddenly opened, and in such a manner! To his horror there appeared stretched across the crimson field, an undulating line of light, as it were a white serpent descending the mountain, its course directed toward the palace!

“It is madness to doubt!” he cried, in the alarm of conviction. “If I hesitate longer the dead walls will speak.”

Hastily gathering his parchments, medicines and other treasures, he placed them in a cedar

chest, threw his robes over them, and when the servants returned, opened the secret passage which had so facilitated the exit of Herekla, and in a few moments joined the party in the cabin of the Moon.

But Zemar had not arrived. Salza declared he could neither find the prince nor gain any information concerning him subsequent to his departure with the messenger of Astera.

Filled with alarm Ishma made further inquiry, and learned that as the afternoon wore away and Zemar came not, Astera sent a messenger, who returned, saying he was nowhere to be found. Thinking he might have been summoned to his father's presence, she had waited anxiously till nightfall and was about to renew the search, when Ishma's startling message absorbed every other thought.

Their hearts sank with vague forebodings. Astera insisted upon delay till this strange disappearance could be investigated and Ishma was about to take the hazard, when a heavy boom sounded from the tower of Kohl and balls of fire shot rapidly from the Castle, signals always given for the pursuit of fugitives.

"Our flight is discovered," cried Ishma. "The guard are already on our track. In a moment they will swarm upon the quay, and escape will be impossible."

Everything was in readiness ; Karmos, the captain, had profound respect for the Oriental physician ; he was aware that the Moon was a present to the Princess Astera ; the sumptuously appointed vessel was placed at her disposal ; her commands were law ; and when the order to cast off was given, the rowers bent to their oars, the sails responded to the invitation of the breeze, the Moon slipped from her moorings and flew like an arrow out into the canal before the raging emissaries of the tyrant could reach the quay.

Zemar was perforce abandoned ; it was better that his fate should be left in uncertainty than that the destruction of the others should be made sure.

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XXXV.

A STORM AT SEA.

*"But who shall bide thy tempest, who shall dare
The blast that wakes the fury of the sea."*

THE royal seal presented to Atla by the enamored king, insured prompt attention from government officials. The Phenician Moon dropped quietly down the canal, the warders threw open the sea-gates, and, with these facilities, the fugitives soon found themselves outside the last break-water. Bright starlight made the surroundings visible and Atla regarded with mournful interest the scene of her mother's shipwreck and death and her own advent into life. Stimulated by these associations, her thoughts concentrated as never before upon the mystery of her parentage and country. She had often visited the different ports of Atlantis and had learned the names and use of everything that pertains to sea-going vessels. She had made many excursions in the smooth safe harbors, but this was her first experience on the broad ocean.

As the vessel struck rough water and rocked in the long, rolling waves, as the wind piped in the rigging and the sailors responded to the orders of the captain, all softer sentiments were forgotten, a new and inexplicable impulse seized her.

She tossed off the light turban that covered her head, her blue eyes sparkled, she sang wild songs and rejoiced like one who, for the first time, finds his native element. Soon her songs became more strange and wonderful, unintelligible words mingled with those familiar, words in a rugged tongue but of great power and sweetness.

Awe-struck, her friends recognized tones of command, triumph, pathos and grief. Suddenly her voice was stilled, and a soft, gusty music took its place—a sound, irregular, mysterious, enthralling. Atla listened with an expression of peculiar intelligence; unconscious of any human presence she remained silent and motionless while a smile of angelic sweetness irradiated her features.

Although the night was far advanced she could not be persuaded to go below. Astera and Ishma could not fathom this unusual mood, and as the shores of Atlantis faded from sight, they left the deck hoping that Atla would follow.

Then, becoming aware that she was alone among foreign sailors, this daughter of ocean flew down

the companion-way like a frightened sea-bird and joined her friends below.

The Moon, aided by sail and oar, made good speed to the southward, where an island called Surchi, settled by Atlanteans, would afford the fugitives protection until they could mature plans for the future. Ishma hoped to fall in with the ship of Herekla, that they might cross the great ocean in company and find safety in Tyrhena. At length, oppressed with care, he lapsed into uneasy slumber.

Soon after midnight the breeze suddenly fell off, a sense of suffocation roused the sleepers and sent them on deck for relief. A startling change had taken place in the aspect of nature. A dull haze overspread sea and sky; a black line hemmed in the horizon; not a breath of air rippled the water; the long swells were glassy; the sails hung idle; the rowers toiled hard but could scarcely stir the becalmed ship.

Passengers and crew in helpless anxiety watched these portentous signs and waited for the day.

At length, without any warning flush of dawn, the orb of light, red and bleared like the eye of a drunkard, glared from the mist-bound sea and, hanging for a moment irresolute upon the horizon's brim, slowly staggered up the sky; but the sickly gloom of day was more appalling than the

blackness of midnight. The shrouded sun was burning hot ; the water was moveless as a pavement of stone ; an awful silence pervaded the vault of heaven. The ship seemed sealed up in nothingness ; the wheels of nature seemed to stop.

Each countenance disclosed a dread of some impending horror, every breath was a gasp, every heart-beat was audible, none spake or moved, as if fearing a sigh might jar the world.

Suddenly the spell was broken ; a terrific detonation shook sky and sea—another and another followed in quick succession till the sound was recognized as the continuous bellow of a volcano. A lurid glare for a moment overspread the sky ; a shower of pumice-stone and ashes descended, then thick darkness fell upon the ship ; a dead swell heaved the water, and fitful gusts of wind, hot as the breath of a furnace, tore wild and ghastly rifts in the black mist through which were caught glimpses of the fire-illuminèd heavens.

Overpowered by the dead swell, Astera, Ishma, and the servants grew ashy pale, hastened below and threw themselves upon the floor of the cabin oblivious of rank and precedence. Atla, unaffected by this malady, followed and did all in her power for their relief.

While watching the sick she became conscious that the dead calm was broken ; the boat was in

rapid motion which grew more and more unsteady—it rocked, heeled and righted, all in a moment.

At length inky darkness gave token that the sun had gone down ; the wind increased to a gale ; it hissed and screeched past the small windows with frightful persistence till presently a great sea smote the vessel a blow that shook it from bow to stern.

Atla, who had wrapped herself in a heavy silken scarf to be ready for any emergency, sprang up the companion-way and took one wild look at the sea. A flash of lightning made visible the retreating surge that had just given the ship such a terrible shock. Master and sailors stood paralyzed.

Then some inexplicable impulse took possession of this child of the water. Intuitively she comprehended the instant peril and the only hope of salvation. Her voice of command rang out clear and distinct above the elemental din :

“Close every aperture, make fast the helm, lash yourselves! Lose not an instant, the great wave will return.”

Suiting action to word, she unwound the long scarf, and bound herself to the mainmast ; there was no time to go below. She had spoken the Phenician language, the sailors understood, and

flew to obey as if a celestial messenger had called from the skies.

None too soon. The black mountain of water rushed back upon the ship, the swirl took away the breath and caused a sinking sensation as if one were taken by the heels and hurled against a rock; a singing filled the ears, that drowned for a moment even the roar of the elements; everything that had not been made fast was carried into the sea.

After the great wave passed the storm raged with redoubled fury, the demons of destruction made a fresh assault; another shower of hot ashes and pumice-stone threatened to fire the ship or swamp it, but the rising waves swept them away. The grinding of the keel through the rough sea, the creaking and snapping of the harassed timbers, the screech of the wind and hiss of seething water, could be heard at brief intervals between the roar of volcano and crash of thunder. Hanging between a black sky and blacker sea, helpless as drops of shattered foam, all realized that they were in the grip of the deadliest monster nature lets slip from her cave of horrors when in her most cruel mood.

Hours passed; there was no cessation of the tempest; they knew not if it were day or night; the palpable darkness was only made visible by

the sharp flicker of electric fire. The sick ones below sank into unconsciousness, those on deck felt themselves entering the shadow of death and yielded to the apathy of despair.

At length there came a dull crash followed by a tremendous rise of water, as if the foundations of a continent were shattered and it was settling into the sea.

The ship, impotent as a dry leaf in a tempest, was tossed upward, upward on a vast surge that threatened to drown the very stars. The captain and many of the crew, stunned and breathless from the terrific rush, would have been swept away but for the protecting cords.

At this supreme moment Atla's appearance was almost superhuman. Her draperies fluttered like things of life, her loosened tresses streamed out upon the blast. She manifested neither fear nor consciousness of danger. Her clasped hands were raised to heaven, her upturned eyes looked through and beyond the tempest, an expression of rapture or ecstasy illuminated her pale face; in her unearthly exaltation she seemed to mingle with the elements and become a phantom of the storm.

And now the sky-racked vessel was encircled by a band of flame and upon the top of the mast to which Atla was lashed hung a great ball of fire.

It descended and the doom of this heroic maiden appeared inevitable. But she was protected by nature's immutable law ; her head was enwrapped in a silken cover, the deadly thunderbolt owned the presence and power of its subtle antagonist, glanced harmlessly past, bounded upon the deck with a terrific report and fell hissing into the sea.

Atla's whole frame quivered, some incomprehensible spirit possessed her, the pale lips moved convulsively, strange words struggled a moment for utterance and burst forth in the fervency of invocation : " OH—MIGHTY—THOR ! "

Whence came that word of awful power, name of the Northern Thunder—unheard, unspoken in the land where Atla had birth ? Whence came the sublime indifference to danger, the exaltation of this delicately nurtured princess, in an hour of elemental fury ? What was the latent power, hitherto undeveloped, unsuspected, that fired her blood and strung her nerves to supernatural tension ?

Was it a sudden outburst of transmitted qualities, the evolution of inherited traits ? Was it the result of pre-natal influences ? Or can the soul, in moments of supreme exigency, as on a spiritual palimpsest, flash its divine illumination backward through past ages, and appropriate the experience

of a former existence; or forward into the future and rending the envelope of material surroundings, enter the spirit world, witness sights indescribable, listen to words that cannot be spoken, cannot even be recalled?

* * * * *

After the storm was over and Atla lay upon the cushions of the cabin, thoroughly exhausted, Astera said, "Thy forecast, courage and endurance are more than human, dear sister. But for thee we had been lost.

"By what miracle wert thou made wise and strong, in the midst of danger that paralyzed even veteran sailors?"

"I cannot unveil to thee, my dearest friend," Atla replied, "the secrets of that tremendous hour. We have often puzzled over the mystery of my birth and parentage—I may say this much, dear Astera—I have penetrated the mystery—My father was a Sea King!"

XXXVI.

THALOK THE KING.

THALOK had triumphed. In the Hall of the God, from his place upon the ivory throne, he had been crowned and sceptered—no one questioned his authority, none opposed his will. The hasty ceremonies were safely passed; the court was dismissed with a flourish of trumpets and the monarch of Atlantis retired to an inner chamber.

His first official act was to summon Aghi, the public executioner. The other attendants left the royal presence and after receiving the king's bounty, Aghi also retired.

Proud Thalok sat alone in the embrasure of a window, endeavoring to compose his mind so distracted by the varying events of the last few fateful days. His interview with the sorceress in the Palace of Night; the rage of the serpent; the Feast of Raynir; the awful omens in earth and sky; the panic and slaughter which resulted in the loss of Ciquan and the Chatzes; the death of King Kron, his brother (here he shuddered and looked

over his shoulder into the gathering darkness of the room); his hasty usurpation of the government; the information he had just received from Aghi—all this passed rapidly in review, as he strove to bring order out of the chaos of thought. Thus far he had been successful. His supremacy was established, assured, save for the claim of one frail girl. Again he shuddered; but, rousing himself, muttered, "Thalok, art thou turned coward? Shall one slight breath prevent thee? Nay, thou hast already dared too much to hesitate." He turned uneasily to sum up resulting advantages; the picture forming in his mind was not a pleasant one.

Just then a puff of smoke and a flash of red light issued from Kopalt, a volcano in range of vision. Ah! too well he remembered the secrets that mountain could disclose. How oft in former days he had from this very window waited for a far different signal.

"Kirtyah!" he exclaimed. A breath of night air came through the window and a faint sound like the rustle of a curtain softly drawn was heard within as he spoke again, "Kirtyah, the accursed! May the mountains fall and crush her and the demon that serves her!

"Fool, fool, to be taken by her wiles! Yes, men are fools to mate with liliths and serpents.

“Yet she has served my purpose, else were I not King of Atlantis. Now I have done with her forever. Atla is mine—no power on earth can thwart my desire. She will be deprived of her pretty dagger before we meet again. She shall be queen, her offspring my successors.”

He strove to give himself up to pleasant fancies but could not hold the image which should have been most prominent in the picture; it flitted from his mental grasp, it faded and vanished, or more dreadful still, it changed shape and bore a likeness to the dead king, or to Zemar.

Finally he seemed to be seated on the throne with Atla in all her glorious beauty by his side. A sharp hiss caused him to turn suddenly and a serpent having Kirtyah's face, embraced him in its folds.

Springing up he exclaimed, “I am exhausted by fatigue. I have unwittingly slept and—dreamed!”

He stepped out upon the balcony endeavoring to shake off the depression which weighed down his spirit. He looked at the great city lying so fair on the plain below where lights were beginning to appear, and wondered if any of his subjects envied their king.

He glanced toward the sky, at first too much abstracted to take note of anything in nature,

but he soon became aware of a strange star in the northern heavens that outshone the largest and caused the trees in the garden to cast shadows to the south. In alarm he recalled the appearance of the heavens on the day of the sacrifice—the eclipse—the scimitar-shaped comet that threatened the dark sun, the brilliance of the star Mazzaroth as it glowed in the western sky.

“The omens are fearful and obscure,” he muttered, “I must consult the Oriental Magian, I require his aid, he knows more than my stolid astrologers. I hate foreigners; Ishma above all others. Would he had disappeared with the Phenician prince. I do not understand him, and I fear he does understand me, his influence with Atla antagonizes mine, I will tolerate him only till the crisis is past. The crisis—is it not already past? Possibly I can use his science to answer the query.”

“Ho, there, without!” he cried.

Instantly Zilba of the glittering eye stood before him. Zilba, fleet of foot and round of limb, Thalok’s favorite page, to whom his most important and delicate errands were entrusted.

“My lord,” said the soft voice of the boy.

Thalok gave him a piercing look. Zilba’s manner for the first time reminded him of something in the past, something dangerous; but in the

present stress of anxiety he did not stop to analyze the feeling.

“Call Ishma, the physician.”

“Pardon, my lord,” Zilba replied; “a new star has been discovered; the courtiers but now sent to the tower of the sage to inquire the significance of the wonder and he is nowhere to be seen.”

“Run to the apartments of the Lady Atla,” the king answered hastily; “no doubt he is there.”

“Alas, alas, my lord, that I should be compelled to say it, neither Ishma nor the Lady Atla can be found. The palace, court and gardens have been searched in vain.”

Thalok rushed into the corridor and summoned the officers of the household, who, fearing an outburst of wrath, reluctantly confirmed the unwelcome news, adding that the Princess Astera and the Prince Zemar were also missing.

“Sound the alarm!” he cried in rage; “throw up fire-signals; illuminate the palace and city; call out the royal guards and soldiers; leave no corner unexplored! Bid Ciquan——” he paused, “Bid Aghi search the subterranean vaults! Bring ye the culprits before me, or pay the forfeit of their lives by the loss of your own!”

In the confusion that followed, a man came run-

ning in breathless saying: "Oh, mighty Thalok, in the dim twilight I saw chariots moving swiftly from the Gate of the Garden to the landing where lies the Phenician ship called the Moon."

The crowd paused to listen.

"To the quay," Thalok shouted; "detain the ship; arrest all on board!"

Before the final words were uttered another messenger rushed in. "My lord," he shouted, "the Moon has left the Basin and is speeding her way through the canal to the great harbor."

"Are there other ships lying at the quay?"

"None, my lord; every vessel has disappeared."

"There is treason!" he cried.

XXXVII.

THE PURSUIT.

*"Tell us cold, stern philosophy, oh, tell us why,
That for the love-glance of a woman's eye,
Men will renounce all other good—and die?"*

THALOK hesitated for a moment during which certain possibilities flashed upon his mind. Madened by conflicting passions he forgot royal dignity, official duty and court requirements, and, throwing prudence to the winds, thundered forth his commands in mingled threat and imprecation.

"Yoke to my chariot the flying steeds Wind and Wave. Bid the charioteer Hunap, with outriders attend."

"My lord king," a chamberlain ventured to suggest, "the coronation-feast awaits thee."

Thalok remembered he had eaten nothing since the death of King Kron. "Bring hither a goblet of pulque," he said. It was brought, and emptying it at one draught he added: "The feast may wait my return for I will neither eat nor drink until——," he paused, for the rumble of wheels was heard and the chariot drawn by four white

steeds, reined by Hunap, the winner of many a race, now stood waiting at the grand entrance.

Reason and policy were stifled; manhood was lost; the wolf in his nature dominated; he would pursue and raven. Oblivious of all save a burning desire to overtake the fugitives and obtain possession of Atla, the monarch of Atlantis gave orders to the charioteer and outriders to keep in the broad highway bordering the canal, to spare neither whip nor spur till they reached the city of Zuiva only three leagues distant, where the main sea-road intersected the first encircling canal. Here he hoped to overtake the Phenician ship and seize his prey before the necessary port regulations could be complied with and the sea-gates opened.

The door of the chariot closed and the imperious tyrant sank upon the cushions exhausted. Stupefied by fatigue, hunger and the fumes of pulque, he was whirled rapidly along, unconscious of time and space or the increasing darkness and a peculiarity in the motion of the chariot, till he was somewhat rudely awakened by the guard who cried out: "Hear, hear, my lord king!"

Rousing himself and looking out into the darkness, Thalok discovered that the chariot was afloat and the horses were plunging through deep water.

"Idiot," he shouted to the struggling charioteer, "thou art in the canal."

"Nay, my lord," Hunap replied in a frightened voice; "we are still on the highway, but for a long time have been in water, which every moment rises higher. The people calling from the roofs of submerged buildings cry out that they and we are lost. Never was such a tide known."

Thalok recognized the flickering lights on the towers of Zuiva and knew from their position he was at the landing of that city. The graceful foreign ship was nowhere to be seen; indeed danger from the flood was so immediate he scarcely gave it a thought, but he saw in dim outline just before the chariot a merchant vessel which though evidently moored at the wharf, was floating above it and straining at the cable with a force that threatened each instant to part it or to swamp the ship, while master and crew were demented through-fright. Although Thalok realized that his personal safety, even his life, was menaced, he knew no fear and faltered not.

There was a heap of merchandise, the lading of the vessel, lying on the wharf partly out of water; to this point he ordered the charioteer to urge the floundering steeds. By a skillful leap he reached the top and climbed upon the deck of the ship. Without a thought for his attendants, he seized

an axe and severed the confining cable. Thus released, the ship immediately righted and drifted out to sea.

But Thalok went not alone into the merchant ship. The charioteer abandoned the drowning horses, took a strong box from beneath the seat of the chariot and in the darkness shoved it stealthily on deck; himself followed and drew after him a slight boy who had been his companion in this fearful race. Having secreted these in a remote part of the ship, he sat down to rest and reflect upon this unexpected termination of the adventure. Hunap, the favorite charioteer of Thalok, the hero of the turf, also the lover of Kirtyah, her willing instrument and avenger, was commissioned and prepared to pursue the traitor with unrelaxing vigilance. Zilba, the soft-voiced page, was his companion, and the mysterious box the resting-place of a serpent, even of Lucksor the Terrible, who now lay asleep made torpid by the arts of the sorceress. At his side was placed the scarf of Thalok!

The stars disappeared, the night grew darker, the wind died away, a black mist settled over the water, sailing and steering were impossible. And upon the deck of that becalmed bark, shrouded in impenetrable gloom, stood the King of Atlantis, a ravening wolf, arrayed in coronation

robes, wearing a jewelled crown upon his forehead beneath which his dark eyes gleamed with the fire of desperate passion ; pursuing others, himself pursued by Fate. Fearless, unscrupulous, malignant, all unconscious of the deadly peril at his side, he blindly rushed upon his doom.

And in another ship, not many leagues distant, two fair girls and a venerable sage strove with anxious eyes, to pierce the overhanging mist ; fearing most of all to discover the sails of a pursuer.

But these were not alone ; other ships swung upon the sullen waves that awful night over which the shadows of oblivion have brooded through so many ages ; for in all the ports of Atlantis, men and women, impelled by the instinct of self-preservation, or some mysterious presentiment we may not fathom, fled to vessels lying in the harbors and launched upon the flood, preferring to trust themselves to that fickle element rather than remain on the solid earth which it was assuredly swallowing.

XXXVIII.

THE FATE OF ZEMAR.

*" There was a door to which I found no key,
There was a veil through which I could not see,
Some little talk awhile of me and thee
There was—and then no more of thee and me."*

AT noon of the eventful day that witnessed the death of King Kron, the coronation of his brother, the flight of Isham with his wards and the pursuit by Thalok, it will be remembered that Prince Zemar left the laboratory with a familiar messenger of the Princess Astera. He wondered why he should have been so soon recalled, but these were strange days, unlike the slumberous tranquillity of the past; events crowded each other with a rapidity that staggered surprise.

Nevertheless, when the servant led the way to an unoccupied portion of the palace, he inquired the meaning of the sudden removal of the royal ladies from the Star Pavilion. The page replied that Thalok had caused apartments opening into a rare conservatory and overlooking the Place of Fountains, to be put in order for the princesses, as

befitting their now more exalted rank and that by his order they had just gone thither.

This magnificent suite of rooms the most gorgeous in Atlan, had never been opened since the death of Queen Nyah the mother of Astera. Zemar expressed surprise that a change should have been effected so soon after the death of King Kron—even before the days of mourning had begun.

“It is the will of Thalok,” the messenger replied, “a will that neither prince nor slave may dispute.”

At this moment he opened a door and stepped aside for Zemar, who entered a dimly lighted hall, where by the management of color and shadow every line was made illusive. He took a step forward upon what appeared a level floor and found himself descending an inclined plane. He glanced back to perceive that the guide had not followed and that the door closed with a click peculiar to spring locks. The steep was smooth as glass, there were no railings or side walls and Zemar slid swiftly down the long descent to a landing below without the possibility of a pause.

Here in a marble vault ceiled with stone on every side, where a dreary twilight reigned and the rush of water sounded beneath, Zemar found himself alone.

No—not alone; for, as his eyes became accustomed to the weird light, he was horrified to discover an awful form standing before him. Too surely he recognized the lineaments of Aghi the dreaded, the abhorred—Aghi, the public executioner!

What a contrast was then presented in the dim light of that gloomy cell!

Zemar, whose perfect figure was model for the statue of a god—stately, graceful, lithe as a panther, whose beautiful features reflected a soul as fair, upon whose well poised head and curling hair a turban seemed a crown, robed in the white and gold vestments of royalty—Zemar, beloved of the nation, the friend of all, strong and brave no less than just and gentle, stood in the dismal vault like an angel who had just dropped from the skies.

And confronting him, axe in hand and headman's block at his side, was a dreadful shape associated with the most shocking public spectacles—Aghi, a tall, square-built, burly giant, with small black eyes and grizzled hair, dark and cruel of visage, ferocious in mien, wearing a blood-red cap and frock, holding in hand the instrument of his revolting office, grim as death, relentless as a fiend!

The heart of Zemar sank. The emotion of

Astera at parting was a prophecy—the messenger was a decoy—he had been betrayed, ensnared—he must die like a felon.

Mental action under such circumstances is more rapid than the electric flash. The soul, illuminated for one sublime moment by the divine spark of its own immortality, sees at a glance the past, the present, the future—an eternity of thought in a point of time.

Zemar's first impulse was to spring upon Aghi and stab him to the heart, but an instant's reflection convinced him of the folly of such an attempt. The giant had double his strength. It was youth against manhood; the slender dagger against the ponderous axe. Aghi's horrible craft had quickened eye and hand; he knew how to parry as well as to deal blows. His business was to destroy human life, Zemar's to protect it.

He glanced round this trap of death; there was no outlet save the glazed incline, which he now perceived with dismay had noiselessly disappeared. His murder had been planned with infernal ingenuity; resistance was useless for escape was impossible. If the executioner fell, Thalok impatient for intelligence would send emissaries to find him. Better that Zemar should die at one stroke than live a few hopeless hours to perish by some more cruel though not less certain death.

The man of blood stood silent, piercing the soul of the doomed youth with cold, hard eyes.

At length he spoke. "Zemar, thou art dead!"

"Aghi, wouldst thou take my life?"

"It is the king's command."

"There is no king in Atlantis."

"King Kron is dead, but Thalok thy father at this moment holds crown and sceptre in the Hall of the God. His first decree honored Aghi the headsman. Thalok does not deliberate; it was the warrant for thy death."

Zemar was silent; he did not know what had occurred in the court of his father during this fateful morning; but the information given by Aghi, confirmed by his present condition, assured him of instant doom.

At length he spoke: "Have I ever wronged thee, Aghi?"

"Nay, Prince Zemar, thou hast never wronged me, nor yet any man. As chief arbiter thou didst mete out justice to all. Thou didst restore my Zillah when Thalok took her from me, and for that, as for many another act of righteousness, he hates thee. And thou didst bring the Eastern physician who saved the life of our boy."

"Has my father proved himself thy friend?"

"Nay; he is friend only to Thalok. I am not

his friend ; I am but the weapon with which he strikes."

"Thou art not a passive weapon in my father's hands as is the axe in thine. Men declare and say it boldly, that in courage and resolution Aghi is the equal of Thalok."

"By the gods, they speak the truth ; the king on his throne shall not move me against my will."

"Thou art no coward, Aghi ; it is not through fear that thou wouldst slay me."

"Nay, nay, most noble prince ; I fear not the face of man. I have courage to dare even Thalok's wrath."

"And thou wilt do what thou darest. Aghi is a man of deeds, not words."

"Aye, I will dare and I will do, even were it to the sparing of thy life. I could not behead my innocent boy, nor will I by all the gods of Atlantis, now that I consider the matter, take the life of one who saved him and his mother. Yet it must appear that I am thy executioner, else we are both dead men. No doubt I am wicked, but Thalok is worse ; he scruples at nothing. I will not be his accomplice in the murder of his own son. Prince Zemar, the land reeks with iniquity ; times are changed ; not criminals alone are doomed to die ; and if all criminals were punished, some who sit in high places would lose

their heads. For this the heavens frown, the earth trembles; there is warning in the wind. For this I tire of mine office, my spirit fails, my hand shakes.

"Thou art good and brave; no guilt makes thee coward. Thou didst not blanch before my axe. Neither thy father, nor yet Aghi, have courage like thine. Let Thalok do his worst, I will not strike the blow."

The axe fell from Aghi's hand as he said, "My lord Zemar, come hither."

He raised a trap in the floor, descended and motioned Zemar to follow, by the exit no doubt, prepared for his dead body. They pursued the course of a small rushing stream for a long distance and coming to a blank wall, Aghi removed a stone and entered an underground chamber.

"Prince Zemar," he said, "thou art now beneath a boat-house of Lake Ziclan. The stream that flows into it from the palace has often washed away the blood of innocence; it is free from thine! Remain in this place till I come again at night-fall bringing food and clothing. I must report thine execution to thy royal father."

Aghi retired as he came through the dark passage, and for long hours Zemar paced the floor of his cell, tortured by thought of the anxiety his friends would feel at his mysterious disappearance

and fear that they also might be already victims of the unscrupulous malignity he had himself so narrowly escaped ; and here he must remain, caged as in a felon's cell, powerless to relieve or to suffer with them. The mercy of Aghi was a miracle ; he could not hope to find it repeated by his relentless father.

In the silence and darkness of the subterranean chamber, he soon became conscious of unusually severe vibrations of the earth and a low rumbling indicative of volcanic action. Although so accustomed from childhood to these phenomena that ordinarily they were scarcely noticed, they assumed a new importance as he recalled the recent omens in earth and sky and asked himself if possibly it might be true, as Ishma and Aghi forebode, that dire calamities were threatened.

At length after hours of watching, the gruff voice of Aghi was heard above. The ceiling of the vault opened and a rope-ladder was lowered by means of which Zemar left the cell. It was night with not even a lantern to reveal the surroundings.

Aghi spoke, "I came in darkness for light would be hazardous ; our lives hang on a thread. I have seen the newly crowned king ; he is assured of the death of his son. I received a generous reward in treasure and that which always

pertaineth to mine office, the clothing of the condemned. Having the royal passport to enter thy chamber and being unmolested while in it, I also took many other costly trifles. I have bestowed them in the Tower of the Floating Island together with whatever else I thought necessary for sustenance. All these are thine, for thou must go far hence."

"Oh, Aghi, thou art a savior indeed; but how can I leave my beloved princess and other friends to the wrath of my father!"

"They have escaped; even as I came hither, the ship of Phenicia called the Moon, under full sail and oar sped like a swallow along the canal. Their flight is no doubt discovered. Dost thou not hear the signals? The search is already begun. Come forth and listen."

Zemar left the boat-house and perceived a great uproar in the city, the sound of alarm and lights flashing from the tower of Kohl.

"Thou must depart speedily or the guards may discover us. Throw this black mantle over thy shoulders lest the white garments betray thee. It is lined with fur of the lynx and may serve to protect thee from cold, for in what distant country the remainder of thy life will be passed, who can tell? Hasten! cross swiftly to the Floating Island; I will cut the wythes that fasten the

bridge and loose the cable that moors the island. The wind sets from the north, unfurl sail and soon thou wilt reach the other shore. There I will have ready conveyances that will speed thee and the treasure to the southern harbor. Then take ship for some distant land. There is risk, but it is thine only chance for safety. Mayhap thou wilt fall in with those that love thee."

"Aghi, I am most grateful; how can I repay thee?"

"Give me no thanks, and as for favor or treasure, I need them not from any man—my days are numbered."

"Thou must hope for better days."

"Not so, not so, most noble prince. *I have received the summons.*"

"The summons?"

"Yea; the summons to die. Thou rememb'rest the black-maned lion that lies chained by the Gateway of Ancient Shadows? I have always menaced him with my axe; but this morning, when I essayed to enter and store the unused weapon, this terrible beast rose up against me with clank of chain and horrible roar. As I live Prince Zemar, the lion spake to me!"

"Spake to thee? What said he?"

"There were no words, but the meaning was clear."

“Oh Aghi, this is the vagary of a distempered imagination.”

“Nay, my prince; Aghi, the executioner, is not a man given to foolish imaginings. Have I not often heard him speak to the condemned as they passed through that gate? And thus he spake to me. I tell thee, Prince Zemar, my days are numbered and finished.”

“Oh, my friend, may the gods—nay, may the One Supreme remember thee in the hour of trial, even as thou hast remembered me.”

XXXIX.

THE WRECK OF A WORLD.

*"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, * * *
* * * all shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."*

*"There were thunderings, lightnings, an earthquake, and
great hail."*

THE Floating Island softly yielded to the breeze, and drifted from shore. Overcome by the exhausting adventures of the day, Zemar slept heavily on the bed Aghi's forethought had provided. Toward morning he awoke with a sense of oppression; the breeze had fallen off, the island was stationary in the middle of the lake, there was a dead calm, an expectant hush, nature was pulseless.

Looking anxiously toward the city he was aware of something unfamiliar in its appearance. The shores seemed more distant, the lake larger; yet every object on the island bore its usual proportion. He pressed his hand upon his forehead. Had the harrowing events of the previous day

and the heavy sleep that followed, deranged his senses? He looked again; the shore-lines were certainly less bold, the buildings on the banks lower; the whole plain seemed depressed, or flattened, the distant landscape ill-defined; strangest of all, the northern sea a hundred leagues away, was visible.

The mountains also in some unaccountable way were changed in position or distorted in outline; no sky-tinted snow smoothed the furrows on their rugged brow; the giant cypresses monarchs of the forest, no longer stood in serried ranks proudly saluting the stars; decrepit, straggling, bowed, they stretched out spectral arms as to implore mercy from the scowling heavens.

The colored domes and turrets of Palace, Castle and Temple stood grand and beautiful as ever. Yes; but not as upright. Ah! all the buildings slanted to the east.

Zemar was dazed at this inexplicable condition of things. The events of the last few fateful days passed before him crowding and jostling each other into frightful confusion. Was he losing his mind, or were the forbodings of Ishma and Aghi about to be realized?

He gauged with his eye the height of water on the nearer buildings and saw with consternation that it was rising. Evidently a flood was in prog-

ress, yet there was no rain, or incoming surge; even the snow had disappeared from the mountaintops and the streams had gone dry. What then, could cause this unprecedented overflow of the lake?

There must be some hidden agency threatening the country with destruction. The plateau upon which the city of Atlan stood was the highest land in Atlantis; Noraghi its loftiest mountain-peak. What then, must be the condition of the lower portions? Was there no power on earth to arrest the progress of the flood? His friends and dependants, where were they? He groaned aloud in helpless anguish.

As day advanced, the sun became obscured; the heavens were overcast with tumultuous clouds hurrying in different directions; the air was stifling; a sickening yellow haze quivered above the city—the distant landscape melted from sight. Zemar recognized the earthquake signs, and waited in breathless expectation.

The shock came with terrific violence—another and another followed; the buildings shook, the earth heaved, and on the silent lake inky surges rose and fell like the backs of enormous dragons preparing to swallow the land. Again all was deathly stillness.

A wild suspicion that had previously flashed

through Zemar's mind now forced itself as an awful certainty—The water was not rising—the *land was sinking!* Atlantis, Queen of the Sea, was disappearing beneath its waves!

He now perceived a great commotion on land. Panic-stricken men and women rushed through the streets or crowded the heights, flocks of birds circled over the city not daring to alight; ferocious beasts and domestic animals dashed across the plains in promiscuous herds, or struggled up the hills together, all other instinct lost in that of self-preservation.

His absorption in this scene of terror was suddenly terminated. A crash broke the ominous silence—a grinding, abysmal crash, as if the very ribs of earth gave way beneath the weight of a continent—a crash that seemed infinite in depth and awfulness, that jarred the clouds, the earth, the ocean. Was it an echo of the crash, a reverberation that rolled beneath the lake with such horrible distinctness? Shuddering, Zemar turned to inquire.

Alas, alas! there was no western shore! The fringed banks, the wooded steepes, the purple hills, had vanished. Fair Ziclan was no more, merged in the illimitable waters of the outer sea!

Again his despairing gaze turned to the city. Buildings were falling in every direction; dust,

smoke, and flame went up to the relentless heavens, mingled with shrieks of mortal agony.

The volcanoes opened their throats, and their bellow became one incessant roar. Dun smoke streamed from a hundred craters, and, assuming frightful shapes, crawled round the stony dome like shadows of gigantic bats and dragons. Pumice and ashes were hurled into the clouds, to fall again in showers. Daylight was blotted out and from the murky sky thunder echoed the roar of volcanoes, lightning vied with the fire of the craters in illuminating this wreck of a world.

A deluge of rain and rocks of ice, mingled with coals of burning sulphur, now fell from the sky, and the last vials of wrath were poured out upon the doomed city. It sank lower and lower, till all disappeared save the magnificent structures on the terrace. By the electric flicker Zemar saw the gleaming ruins reel like a ship in a storm, and at last, with a whirl, sink from view in an abyss of mud and ashes, while the writhing vapors above were drawn into the vortex and closed the scene.

Zemar now recalled the mysterious words of the oracle on the day of the eclipse :

“ When the stem of the lily is broken the flowers will perish.” And while tears of anguish fell from his eyes, he moaned : “ Oh, lily of the sea fringed by verdant shores, thou art fallen ; thy

fair cities have perished ; thy heart of fire has ceased to glow !

“ Oh, wreck ! oh, ruin ! oh, mangled corse of all earth’s loveliness ! ”

At this moment he became aware that the Floating Island also felt the inward draught, and was certainly descending into the maelstrom of death. As he stood in the majesty of desolation, lone spectator of the most appalling tragedy ever enacted on earth, he exclaimed, in the bitterness of despair :

“ The One Supreme ? Supremely cruel, or indifferent—who destroys alike the innocent and the guilty.

“ Justice will in the end prevail ! So said Ishma.

“ I HAVE SEEN THE END !

“ In another moment the frail foundation upon which I stand will be but a bubble in that seething hell, and I—— A puff of mist rising from a bottomless pit ! ”

Insensibility was about to spare him consciousness of the last agony, when an icy gust from the north swept by, and recalled the flitting sense. Instinctively he wrapped himself in the fur mantle, and a feeling of warmth revived his courage.

The cold blast struck the Island, it quivered

like an aspen ; there was a confusing jar, an unsteady whirl, a hoarse dissonance, as when the wind veers and changes. And now is heard the low, sullen roar of mighty waters ; a distracting din like the turning of ten thousand wheels rends the air. The noise increases, it draws nearer, the gale shrieks and howls ; it rushes upon the lowering vapors, they are shattered by its force, they are twisted into fragments and hurled away.

The black pall is rent, and behold, another horror ! A mountain of water that would have overtopped the city, if it were standing, rolls in from the north, a vast unbroken surge.

Zemar waits in dull despair the oncoming of this new engine of death, by which the Island, his last hope of salvation, will be swept away.

But, lo ! a miracle ! The avalanche of water hurls itself into the abyss where proud Noraghi, last survivor of the volcanic group, still lifts its blazing front.

Fire and water meet, the giant forces grapple, but at the very onset the incandescent mountain splits from top to base.

The infernal regions quake, the crater yawns, and from its gaping jaws a molten lake swells upward to the scowling heavens in billows that flash and flare as if the world were all on fire. Defiantly they meet the foe ; they rage and roar,

they hiss and seethe. But vain the struggle—they falter and fade—they flicker and expire; the water triumphs, for an ocean is its reserve!

The conquering tide rushes on, seeking for other prey, but its strength and fury are exhausted; it sinks in sullen wrath.

And now Zemar gazes upon a dreary, vacant waste of water; the frowning bluff, the city amid groves and gardens, the towering mountains with plume of smoke and crown of fire, *all*, ALL are gone! The convulsion is over, the agony past, and he, a leaf torn from the tree of life, flutters upon the breast of palpitating darkness.

The awful tide reaches the Floating Island a spent wave, with force only sufficient to carry it gently forward, far, far from that Sea of the Shadow of Death, beneath whose dismal mist and turbid water rests the fairest kingdom upon which the sun has ever shone.

Here pitying nature spreads a mantle of perennial green, to hide the melancholy ruin from the gaze of man;* and the winds forever sigh, the waves sob evermore, and all the elements join in a requiem for the countless thousands that sleep beneath the sea!

* The Sea of Sargasso.

XL.

A L O N E .

*"Oh, friends, I am a lone benighted ship,
Before me lies a vast untravelled gloom ;
Behind, a wake of glory fading fast
Into the hungry waves that gave it birth."*

ZEMAR realized, with blank indifference, that by some miracle he was saved, that wind and tide were bearing him southward. His heavy eyes were lifted as in supplication to the scowling heavens, then turned despairingly upon the tumultuous water; he strove to recall the scenes through which he had just passed, to remember his friends and former life; but persons, places, and events were distorted, incoherent, disarranged. In dull agony he struggled to retain his fast-failing senses, but mind and body had lost their tension; he sank upon the bed and passed into a state of profound lethargy.

* * * * *

The Floating Island, built to gratify the caprice of a luxurious monarch, proved itself a marvel

of strength, no less than of beauty. The living sea-rods that formed its base, matted and interlaced during a growth of twenty years, had become stronger than steel; no natural force could rend them asunder. The tower of cork buoyed itself and the garden; flying stones and rocks of ice fell harmless upon the elastic wood, while the circular foundation repelled the assault of wind and wave, and preserved the balance of the superstructure, though its drenched and battered condition gave token of the hardship it had encountered. Ishma builded better than he knew; his dream of the model was an inspiration and a prophecy.

When Zemar woke from the unnatural slumber into which he had fallen, the sun was shining, the wind was but a breeze, and the Floating Island without motion. He soon discovered that it had grounded among other wrecks, upon the coast of Surchi. Information of the extraordinary arrival of Prince Zemar being immediately communicated to the authorities, he was welcomed and conveyed to the city of Yonga, not far distant.

Here, to the extreme delight of both parties, he found the Phenician prince and his councillors, who had taken refuge in this port after leaving Atlantis.

Herekla soon recovering tranquillity, had determined upon a plan of action, and was contemplating a return; but the aspect of the stars, the eclipse of the sun, and the noonday brilliancy of Mazzaroth so verified the prediction of the astrol-ogers and warned them of some great disaster, that they determined to remain in their present moorings.

Their surprise at Zemar's strange arrival in Surchi was changed to fear and horror by his explanation. To their anxious inquiries he could only repeat the information given by Aghi, that the Moon and its precious freight left Atlantis several hours previous to the catastrophe.

"With this assurance," said Herekla, "we must be content, for the prince is sorely in need of rest. After he is refreshed, we will listen to his marvellous story."

XLI.

THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN SUFFERING.

*"What dreadful noise of water in mine ears!
What sights of ugly death before mine eyes!
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks,
Ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered in the bottom of the sea."*

THE governor of Surchi gladly offered the hospitalities of the island to his distinguished visitors, and placed the vice-regal residence at their disposal. Zemar was conducted to an inner chamber, where, surrounded by every comfort wealth could command or sympathy suggest, he was left to repose.

After long hours of sleep, he rose refreshed, and joined his friends on a broad veranda overlooking the sea. Here the evening meal was served, after which, in the deepening twilight, he, sole witness and survivor, described the cataclysm by which Atlantis was overwhelmed, and related the story

of his miraculous escape from the hate of man and the rage of the elements.

As he paused, Kadmon, whose eyes had been closed during the recital, spoke: "All this I foresaw in Cacara and again at Gades, when I cast the horoscope of our beloved prince.

"Madai, thou wilt remember what I said to King Melek at the council of the Magi?"

"I well remember," Madai answered, "thy words were these: 'To Herekla it is the hour of fate; but whether good or ill portends, I swear by the majesty of the Unnamed One, I know not—the place was strange—the land heaved like the surges of Cham; darkness fell upon mine eyes, and mine ears were deafened by the roar of mighty waters.'

"To the prince it has proved the hour of fate. By what seemed at the moment a strange misfortune, he was forced to leave the place of danger for one of safety. By the same fortune he was separated from her whose welfare henceforth must be bound up in his own. I doubt not Atla is also saved, and we may rest assured that with her, Astera and Ishma will be found."

"Thy words are comforting," said Zemar. "If it so prove, thanks to the One Supreme, whose worshipper I am henceforth. But, oh, my friends, ye who are from the East, whence wisdom com-

eth, tell me, I pray, why my beautiful country, its glorious mountains, fruitful plains, its works of incalculable wealth and toil, its magnificent cities; above all, its thronging population, the young and innocent, no less than the aged and wicked, must in one day and night of horror sink in the whelming sea?

"Mine eyes blench before the vision of their agony; their shrieks still distract mine ears. If the One Supreme is beneficent, why this indiscriminating fury of the elements; why this cruel, unmeaning sacrifice?"

What mortal can solve the problem or fathom the mystery?

Who but the Lawmaker can conciliate the antinomies?

All were silent—answer there was none.

At length the lips of Kadmon the Mystic were unsealed. The voice, sweet and low, came from afar; the voice of the soul uttered these words:

"Thou Ether God! Thou limitless One! Thou Perfection! Brahm! kindle the Divine Spark in the Self of these souls, that they may know their spirits, one with Thee!"

The others who had knelt during this invocation rose, and Kadmon, taking the hand of Prince Zemar, said: "Brother, thy questioning has the solemnity of a command. There are words that

cannot be spoken, unlawful for man to utter; these thou mayest some time hear, though not from the lips of mortal. Yet all that I may divulge thou shalt know.

“The course of events throughout the material universe is but a consequence of Law Immutable. For this reason the sages of the world record no chronology, write no history. They study Karma, the law of consequences, and by it with mathematical precision, forecast history. What has been, is; what is, will be.

“The law of matter or atoms is change, and by this law, at vast intervals of time, the world is destroyed by conflagration or deluge; by fire when all the planets conjoin in Cancer; by water when the same event takes place in Capricorn. Thereafter, by the same law, comes re-creation and renewed life.

“Ah, many such changes have passed upon this old, old earth!

“And mind or spirit is also subject to immutable law, though diverse from that which governs matter—even as the law of fluids differs from that of solids.

“Here also Karma reigns, but because the masses of mankind are gross and do not perceive it, at vast intervals of time enlightened men appear, members of a sacred Order or Brotherhood,

known to the world as prophets or sages. By their influence mankind have learned to clothe and shelter themselves, have compelled the elements to do them service, have perfected the arts of civilization, and have become wiser and better.

"In the later ages the Elder Brother will be re-incarnated for the last time before attaining Godhood. He, the Beginning of the Creation, the Faithful Witness, will reveal a new law to bless mankind. The Mighty Father, the Prince of Peace! I behold him afar off; I see his star, but not nigh. A star did I say? Nay, a Sun, that will in its dawn sing to the waiting world, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come!'"

The seer paused as if unwilling to disturb the glorious vision. Presently he continued: "But the life of a generation is brief, the ages move slowly, dull man still gropes in shadow; there is much to be learned. If the Atlanteans had known the laws that govern the Forces, visible and invisible, the horrors of this dire calamity might have been mitigated, for however incredible it may seem to the uninitiated, there exists an intimate and interdependent correlation between physical and spiritual law, a certain corresponding balance or adjustment, and in consequence of this hidden but potent principle, a strong tendency to absolute evil in the moral world is sure to be

followed by—nay, actually produces—convulsion in the world of matter. Thus was the Lemurian continent overthrown seven hundred thousand years ago; thus perished an eastern race that unlawfully allied itself by marriage with beings of another sphere.

“This law has now justified itself in the destruction of Atlantis. We had scarcely landed upon that fair island, when Madai and myself became aware of a tremendous conflict between forces that should ever be kept in harmony. Wicked men, mighty in intellect, but debased in moral and spiritual nature, had acquired occult knowledge and used it for evil purposes. We knew what the ultimate result must be, but did not forecast the day and hour of its coming; that would have been the labor of years, perhaps of generations.”

At this point Zemar spoke: “Pardon me, oh, my teacher, but I would ask if the recurrence of this tendency to absolute evil is dependent upon the approach of the cataclysms first spoken of? If that be so, then man is not responsible, being the victim of a power over which he has no control.”

“Nay, my son,” Kadmon replied; “although the approach of these grand periodical crises is often heralded by the breaking down of moral and spiritual restraint, they may certainly occur when

the only wreck will be that of inanimate matter, for by proper spiritual development it is possible that humanity may be spared all participation. For all that hath within itself the Divine Spark may have drifted to another planet. But this pertains to the Greater Mysteries.

“Knowing the inflexible nature of this principle, the wise do not bemoan results, however it may affect themselves personally. Why should they struggle or repine? It would avail nothing. There is no discrimination by Law. Will the Aryan turn aside his plough from the panic-stricken ant-hill? Nay, the welfare of man is more important than the peace of an insect community. If the king would build a city will he stay the axe because the aspens of the grove tremble? Nay, they must fall to make room for a palace. Progress is the universal law, the cycles of change move on; what must be, will be, the final result is Good.

“Therefore we should not despair, though our friends are no longer with us. Death is not a finality; the body changes and the spirit passes into other conditions, ascending or descending, according to the acts and aspirations of the previous existence. Though the wise believe rest to be better than action, sleep than waking, death than life, striving through the higher law to attain

Nirvana, yet we know that by the material law of change the dead will live again, and those who sleep in the sea will again walk upon the earth."

"Oh, worshipper of Brahm," said Madai fervently, "thou art my Brother; our belief is one. Eternal harmony and eternal joy are wrought out from chaos and conflict. The dead will live again and Atlantis will once more rise from the sea."

"Oh, fathers," said Zemar, "I thirst for knowledge, yet am I not initiated. Tell me, Prince of Magians, what will the end be?"

Again there was prolonged silence, broken at length by the mystic voice of Kadmon.

"The great Serpent encircles the universe. End there will be none, even as there was no Beginning. The idea of time is but an artifice of man. There is—but one eternal Now!

"Yet there are periods of activity and repose. The Macrocosm, repeating the Microcosm, the days and nights of Brahm, bright and dark links in an endless chain of self-perpetuating law. After incalculable ages our earth and its sister planets will become dead worlds, and its glorious governor a dead sun; a lifeless, invisible, extinguished lamp of heaven, impotent amid the expiring lights of its own constellation and the pale fires of a dissolving universe. And MAN-VANTARA will surely return, its dawn ushered in

by whirlwinds and cyclones of fire, tornadoes and tides for which earth has no name.

Of that tremendous cosmic Night called by the sages PRALAYA, it is written,

‘ Years sweep along—millenniums pass,
Slow move the ages, the eons so vast,
The long bending cycle, the Sos and the Sar,
Till a Kalpa—man’s name for Eternity, ends.
(A Kalpa with Brahm is but one respiration,
A vanishing twilight, the close of a day.)
A Kalpa was finished, but Nature knew not
The day nor the hour when her forces must sleep.
The Grand Obscuration by Law predetermined.

* * * * *

Hark ! from the Centre of Glory Ineffable,
The throne of Dominion beyond the seventh sphere,
A sound like a bell in deep water swung,
Diffusive and dread, the breath of a knell.
A voice still and small, but more resonant far
Than thunder of ocean or roar of the tempest,
Volcanoes and earthquakes in fury conjoined.
So ominous, solemn, it startles each seraph,
Who pauses in flight o’erawed by the portent.
It swells from the Centre in deep undulation,
Expanding, increasing with impulse resistless,
’Tis the fiat of Law in grand diapason,
‘ Now let there be Darkness and Silence,’ it tolls.

It reaches the stars—a chill and a shudder ;
The great worlds hang black, and reel into stillness,
The moons dash together and shiver to fragments ;
Their light is extinguished as water had drowned them,
They flash and expire—all motion is o’er.

palace are extinguished, the inmates slumber ; even earth and ocean seem to sleep.

Absorbed in contemplating the tremendous problem of the Destiny of the Universe and of Man, the friends remain in silence ; they see the constellations rise or set, the stars glow and the planets burn, while the sorrow and discord of the world, the interests of wrangling, restless man, grow phantom-like, and fade away. In dream or reverie the night passes, until the stars are dim, and the low twitter of birds, a breath of air and a faint flush in the east, announce the dawn of day.

XLII.

M I R A G E .

*"The palace and pinnacle totter and fade
From the mist of a sapphire sea."*

WITH the stimulus of sunlight came a desire for immediate action. Herekla expressed the thought that filled every soul.

"Now must we begin the search for the ship that holds our treasure. The Sun is ready to leave port at an hour's notice, and the governor of Surchi places another bark at our disposal. What direction shall we take ?

"A captain wrecked upon this island during the storm reports having seen a vessel launched out of the very sky, and from the one glimpse as it flew past he believes it was of foreign construction. As nearly as he could judge in the terrible scud, it was carried to the south."

Zemar made answer: "Two nights and two days have passed since Aghi saw the Moon under full sail and oar flitting through the grand canal. If it were not overtaken, six hours would suffice

to place it outside the bar of Pirhua. The captain, without any fixed destination, would doubtless sail with the wind, which at that time set from the north.

“Toward morning of the eventful day that followed, there was a dead calm for many hours, and then after the awful catastrophe—how vividly is every circumstance recalled—came the fierce wind and mighty wave. It must have driven their ship as it did my strange bark to the west and south. No doubt it was seen by the captain whose report Herekla has given, but there being no possibility of landing it was still borne onward to the south. Our course will therefore be——.”

The sentence was not finished, for Herekla at this moment sprang to his feet and pointed to the western sky, exclaiming: “Behold, behold! have my eyes lost their integrity, or have they acquired a new power?”

Every eye followed the direction of his hand, and a cry of astonishment burst from every lip. The sun had just risen over the tranquil sea, and in the western sky just above the horizon was seen a wonderful apparition; a harbor and a city suspended in mid-air!

“The New Atlantis,” Zemar cried in rapture; “our fairest colony. I recognize its outlines.”

“And I,” rejoined Herekla, “can see our ship,

the Moon ; a phantom bark lying in a spectral harbor.

“It is a miracle !”

“Nay, my son,” said Kadmon, “I have witnessed the same marvel in the deserts of Africa ; we see upon the sky, as in a mirror, objects far beyond the visible horizon. No doubt we are thus foreshown the land where our friends have found shelter and safety.”

Even as they gazed the mirage slowly faded and was gone. Then their eyes fell, their heads were bowed, and silently each heart rendered thanks to the divine Power that had so marvellously directed their course.

* * * * *

The earthquake, tempest, and tidal wave had been felt all along the coast of the western continent and vague rumors of some terrible calamity suffered by the mother-country were brought in by escaped vessels. Further intelligence was anxiously awaited, and when it was rumored that two stately ships were coming into port under full press of canvas, great excitement prevailed throughout the city. Ishma, the officials, and a crowd of people hastened to the landing to welcome the arrival.

The Phenician Sun was the first to touch the quay ; the princes sprang on shore and were joy-

fully greeted. Ishma embraced them with profound emotion, listening eagerly to a brief recital of their tremendous experience, as they hastened to the vice-regal quarters, where the princesses awaited their coming.

Zemar clasped his cousin in his arms, exclaiming: "Dear Astera, thou and I were dead; now thanks to the One Supreme, a double life is ours."

And Herekla, bowing low after the eastern manner, addressed Atla, saying: "Dear princess, the net in which we were so strangely entangled has been as strangely broken. Fate is not an enemy, as I said in my despair; neither heart nor brain were deceived. I saw thee, my dual, in the upper glory. I can love none save Atla. I will wed no other. Bid me rise thine accepted lord, or banish me——."

"Say no more," cried Atla, giving him her hand; "in my life, as in my heart, reign thou forever, my Lord Herekla!"

XLIII.

KIRTYAH'S REVENGE.

“EARTH HAS NO FURY LIKE A WOMAN SCORNED.”

*“Here the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Smooth their scales and bask in the brine.”*

BUT little time was given for explanation or endearment, before a messenger came running in haste to inform the court that a large Atlantean vessel had just been discovered lying hopelessly wrecked off a dangerous promontory near by, and begging that the princes would accompany the authorities to the scene of disaster and give their advice.

As they rose to comply with this request, Astera said: “Dear Zemar, I will not so soon let thee from my sight, lest some new peril be impending. We will all bear thee company—the place is fearful, but it is not far distant; we have already been thither to see the whirl-pools that struggle among the breakers, to watch the surges thundering along

the shore, and hear the awful voices calling from the rayless caverns."

The royal party set out in advance, accompanied, at a respectful distance, by a multitude of officials and citizens. They followed the smooth beach that skirted the shore at the foot of a cliff called Point Despair, till, upon turning a sharp angle, a scene met the eye that filled them with astonishment and stayed their footsteps.

The basaltic rocks that line the coast at this point, riven asunder by some convulsion in past ages, now formed a gloomy ravine leading from the sea into a dark unfathomed cave. Over its yawning mouth hung spectral yews, black with age, and gnarled and twisted by perpetual winds. Beneath their grewsome shade gyrated a hideous maelstrom, whose black whirling eddies scowled defiance upon any attempt to penetrate its mysteries. The grandeur of this scene was still farther enhanced by a ghostly cataract, the outlet of a river that here fell over the cliff and emptied its waters into the sea.

A line of breakers stretching out from the shore marked where great masses of jagged rock had fallen, over which the surges crashed and thundered into the sunless recess with everlasting roar. The sounds and voices that reverberated through these caverns were so awful, it were slight

stretch of imagination to conceive that vengeful Nature had here her prison-house, where rebellious spirits were doomed to struggle and contend forever with monsters of the deep!

Upon the grim, gray reef, an Atlantean vessel, evidently a merchantman, had struck, and was now rapidly breaking up. There was no sign of life, the crew, no doubt, had perished; but as the party took in the dismal scene, an object met their gaze that chilled the blood and stopped the breath.

Directly fronting them, upon a high rock that projected out of the raging water like a spectre of the abyss, sat the upright figure of a tall, dark man, clad in kingly robes, and wearing a diamond crown.

Bound tightly around his neck and waist, over the tunic of scarlet and gold, there glistened and quivered something like a long scarf of yellow sunlight.

A low cry of fear burst from the lips of Atla.

"It is Thalok!" she exclaimed.

The abrupt voice and sudden pause produced a change; the figure moved slightly, as if about to turn toward the intruders; the scarf unwound itself from neck and waist, the head of a snake, erect, alert, inquiring, peered forth, and two basilisk eyes returned the stare of the horrified gazers.

The princes drew their swords, fearing a spring ; but the serpent, after a moment of hesitation, gradually loosened its hold, slid down upon the rock, hung for an instant on the brink, then dropped into the pool, and, like a sunbeam rippling under the water, faded from sight in the darkness of the cavern.

As the living prop was removed, the fearful figure, outlined against the sky, was seen to waver ; it tottered, the balance of the dead weight was lost, it fell forward with a heavy plunge and sank like lead in the seething waters !

Thus Thalok the mighty met his doom. Impelled by ungovernable passion, he braved the midnight tempest in an unseaworthy bark. In attempt to enter the harbor of New Atlan by night, his ship was dashed upon the reef, and all on board were thrown among the breakers. While the others were drawn unresistingly into the whirling abyss and disappeared forever, this man of giant will struggled with raging surf and deadly draught, and, catching upon a point of the spectral rock, drew himself up to a place of safety. Of safety ? No !—a foe was in pursuit of which he did not dream. The concussion that shattered the ship, let loose and revived the serpent. Enraged by long fasting, Lucksor's keen sense caught the impress of the scarf by his side ;

he followed the scent, his quick eye detected a familiar form; he rapidly swam the black gulf, crept stealthily up the rock, coiled himself round the exhausted frame and fastened his fangs on Thalok's forehead.

And now of what avail are the glory of the temple and grandeur of the palace? What to him are sceptre and crown, that command homage from men and love from women? The scheming priest, the usurping fratricide, the treacherous lover, is himself outwitted, betrayed! And in company of the terrible beast, which has been at once his horror and his instrument of evil, he has left the fair scenes of earth and is lost in the fathomless caves of ocean!

Kirtyah had skillfully woven the meshes of her net. The victim of Thalok's deceit encompassed him with a more subtle deception; the partner of his murderous deeds planned for him a death more dreadful than any he had conceived—the demon that served her had wrought out the revenge.

Yet Hunap and Kirtyah see it not, neither do they rejoice!

They turn not inquiring, they feel no surprise;
No smile curls the lip, no scorn lights the eyes,
Nor flush that mounts up to the cheek, and then dies.
For they sleep where the deep waters flow,
Reclined on the rocks rifts of snow,
In the dim-lighted chambers below.

Their bodies rest, but in the murky night,
The home-bound mariner shrinks with affright,
As struggling through the storm a spirit-bell
Dismally tolls an antiphonal knell.
He strains his sight to catch the dual spray,
That rises o'er the rock and fades away
Like phantoms flitting at the break of day.

Alas, alas, proud Deva, deadly fruit of an unnatural marriage, born under malific stars, cursed with celestial grace and beauty, through whose veins coursed the wild fire of inherited passions, yet whose heart softened with sympathy for a defenceless maiden, thou, the perpetrator of many wrongs, the avenger also of many, in what form wilt thou reappear? Where find place in the next stage of existence?

Beautiful Kirtyah, faithful Hunap, where are your spirits now?

XLIV.

THE SUNSET OF A STORMY DAY.

*"Blindly the wicked work the will
Of righteous heaven."*

As the body of Thalok fell into the sea, the crown became loosened from his forehead; it struck the rock and flew from point to point with a sharp rebound that carried it across the narrow intervening channel to the slant beach where the group of petrified gazers were standing; down the smooth sand it rolled and spent its force at Astera's feet. The astonishing augury could not be mistaken. Zemar raised the diadem reverently and essayed to place it on her brow, but she prevented him, saying: "Not so, my lord; it is too heavy for me to wear."

Taking it in her hand, she bestowed on him the crown, saying: "Hail, Zemar, King of New Atlantis!"

Then Atla came forward and with infinite grace conferred the royal seal, which till this time re-

mained in her possession. The vast crowd upon the shore caught the inspiration of the moment and moved by a common impulse, shouted: "Long live Zemar and Astera, King and Queen of New Atlantis."

As the acclamation ceased, a peculiar radiance was seen to illuminate their features. It was the glory bursting from an iris-hued opal worn upon the bosom of Astera!

* * * * *

Behold the group assembled under the blue vault of heaven, standing upon a strip of silver sand between the verdant steep and boundless sea. Zemar and Astera, Herekla and Atla, in the flush of youth and beauty, their eyes beaming with the rapture of pure love and grateful happiness. Before them stand the venerable sages, whose features reflect their joy. Near by are the faithful servants who shared their danger and deliverance, around are the nobles and citizens of the colony, and over all streams the red light of the setting sun.

The beauty of the picture impressed each beholder. A sudden impulse moved the spirit of Ishma; his face was transfigured as by a divine thought. He stepped forward and raised his hand; every sound was hushed as he spoke: "My children," said he, and his voice trembled with

emotion, "the kingdom of the wicked is overthrown, our enemies sleep in eternal silence. The God of our father Shem has brought us through unparalleled dangers to this happy hour. We will commemorate his goodness by a sacred ceremony. In his name and by virtue of my priestly office, I join Astera and Zemar, Atla and Herekla in the bonds of a true marriage."

The princes and their beautiful brides knelt before the revered sages and received their blessing.

Nor theirs alone, for the spray of the waterfall, borne on a sudden gust, swiftly descending enveloped the bridal group; the background of horror was veiled in a rosy mist, aerial music filled the air, echoed among the crags and died away in the vault of heaven.

For an instant all was hushed in awe, till the crowd, recovering from surprise, sent up a shout of congratulation. Then Athor, the famous runner, sprang up the steep like a chamois, and speeding across the plain carried news of these astonishing events to the city. The soldiers were summoned, and with a crowd of citizens went out to swell the vast cortege, which, as the sun sank in the wave, with music and pean, escorted the illustrious party to their home in the New Atlan.

In Nature's temple, under the crags that gird the shore, a coronation and a double marriage had

been celebrated. Man rejoiced, Earth smiled, the Sun bestowed a kiss of peace, Spirits of air chanted the epithalamium.

But the everlasting Sea, melancholy witness of the death of races and destruction of continents, the Sea hoary with grief and eld, whose bosom heaves with woe unutterable above the wreck of all that beauty was, or is, or e'er will be, the restless moaning Sea retired to his sunless temple, and through its sounding aisles poured forth a monody for the living and for the dead—a solemn undertone, forever uttered, forever heard by the attentive ear, even mid life's most sparkling rhythm.

XLV.

THE NEW ATLANTIS.

*" Oh years of loss, oh joyful years,
What are ye all when heaven appears ?
Who will look back for smiles or tears ? "*

THE colony, now the kingdom of New Atlantis, had been perfecting through the reign of several monarchs. King Kron being greatly pleased with its situation upon the mainland, its wonderful climate and tropical productions, had made its growth and progress his especial care. He had lavished upon its development his vast resources, and had transported thither the best ideas of Atlantean civilization and government. The chief city was modelled after magnificent Atlan, and was in many respects its formidable rival. Indeed, it was more than suspected that the sagacious monarch, fearing the possibility of a casualty such as actually did occur, was about to remove his court to the great western continent. Everything was in advanced preparation for such a change.

Thus it happened that Astera and Zemar succeeded to no empty title or barren heritage, and without contest for supremacy or conflict of interest, they assumed the prestige and glory of an ancient dynasty, in the freshness and vigor of a youthful kingdom.

The happy turn events had so unexpectedly taken caused universal rejoicing. Finding it impossible to restrain the enthusiasm of his subjects, Zemar permitted the wedding festivities to continue seven days, after which he instituted a solemn fast and lamentation for the lost country and its countless dead. Thus originated the mournful anniversary of Izcalli, celebrated for ages among the nations of Central and South America, a reminiscence of which is to be recognized even to this day.

When the festivals were over Zemar organized his court and government. In this he was assisted by the wisdom of the sages and the quick sagacity of Herekla, who, from the extraordinary events of the past, was bound to him by more than fraternal ties. In these congenial labors, and the quiet social pleasures so grateful after a season of hardship and peril, the flight of time was forgotten. Astera and Atla could not easily sever a companionship which began with their first conscious

existence, and wherever Atla dwelt, there Herekla was more than content.

Thus they lingered till winter, when the days began to shorten; then the Phenician sailors cast longing glances toward the sunrise, and spoke often of friends at home. The prince also be-thought him of duty to his father and his own country, and prepared to return.

After consultation it was arranged that Ishma should accompany his daughter to the east, and that Kadmon and Madai should remain with the young king and queen until Phenician ships would come again for friendly interchange.

Therefore, when the tranquil days were come, the season when the sweet influence of the Pleiades encircles the earth, and the waves rest that Halcyone may brood her young, Herekla and Atla bade their friends farewell, and turning the prows of the ships homeward, crossed the ocean, now, unhappily, so much more vast. They rested awhile at the Pillars of Herekles, where the prince, in pious gratitude, erected lighthouses for the benefit of future voyagers, and dedicated them to Melkarth, savior of men.

His arrival, with his beautiful and gifted bride, was welcomed in Cacara by enthusiastic demonstrations of joy, and by none with greater appa-

rent delight than by the wonderful steeds, Zuzin and Zummin.

The queen-mother received Atla as a beloved daughter, rejoiced to find ~~in~~ the chosen of Herekla one who would so faithfully supplement her own influence; and King Melek, proud of her virtue, beauty, and accomplishments, always bestowed upon her the deference due to a queen.

In consequence of Ishma's peculiar relationship to the Princess Atla, no less than from his medical skill, wisdom, and piety, he was at once admitted to the royal council, and to the close of a long life was revered and loved by all with whom he was associated.

In company with the prince and princess he visited the New Kingdom in the West, and had the satisfaction of witnessing the happiness and prosperity of his early friends.

Herekla and Atla lived long and happily, reaping that harvest of peace and joy of which their well regulated youth gave abundant promise.

When King Melek slept with his fathers Herekla succeeded him, governing his people wisely, even as he always governed his own spirit.

During his reign ancient Martu, or Tyrehena, attained the maximum of its power and grandeur.

Many new cities were built and manufactories established.

Upon the magnetic rock where his great discovery was made Herekla erected a splendid temple and observatory, overlooking the sea, dedicating them to the honor of the god Melkarth. The lighthouses at the Gates of Herekles were also greatly enlarged and made brilliant by being overlaid with copper.

The sea-going vessels modelled by his genius, and furnished with the unerring compass, swept the waters of the habitable globe. Peaceful commerce was the glory of the nation ; her merchants scattered bronze and vitrified implements, utensils and gems through all countries. They mined for tin in the British Isles, collected ivory, apes, and peacocks under tropic suns, and lighted Baal's fire along the Norway shore.

In Central America, in Central Asia, in Northern Europe and the Pacific Isles, the remnants of Cushite civilization and the names of Phenician deities, identical and unaltered, attest to the present age the extent and strength of Phenician supremacy.

And King Zemar reigned long and prosperously. His study of the laws of Atlantis, and administration of justice in a city where his unworthy father was so potent, developed in him a

poise of character and genius for statesmanship far beyond his years.

Kadmon and Madai remained in his service, and greatly assisted in maintaining at court and throughout the nation that high type of excellence which had been his early ambition.

His gentleness, combined in such an unusual manner with integrity and firmness, fitted him to become the founder of one of the most magnificent empires of antiquity, of which the Toltec and Aztec were but the lingering shadows. The remains of its civilization in colossal architecture and stupendous public works, are the astonishment and admiration of travellers to this very day.

But the awful experience through which he passed, and the heavy burden of care imposed upon him at such an early age, produced in King Zemar a grave and somewhat melancholy character.

The dignified ruler, in his official life, was never seen to smile; but when he retired to the inner garden of his palace, and reclining under the shadowy palms, listened to the voice of his beloved Astera, and watched the gambols of his beautiful children, his features would brighten with more than youthful radiance, and the dark clouds of care and memory would flee away.

During the lives of these illustrious monarchs, and for many subsequent ages, the interchange of friendship and commerce was continued, for the successors of Herekla went westward for their wives, and the fair-haired daughters of Atla were the welcome queens of New Atlantis.

THE END.

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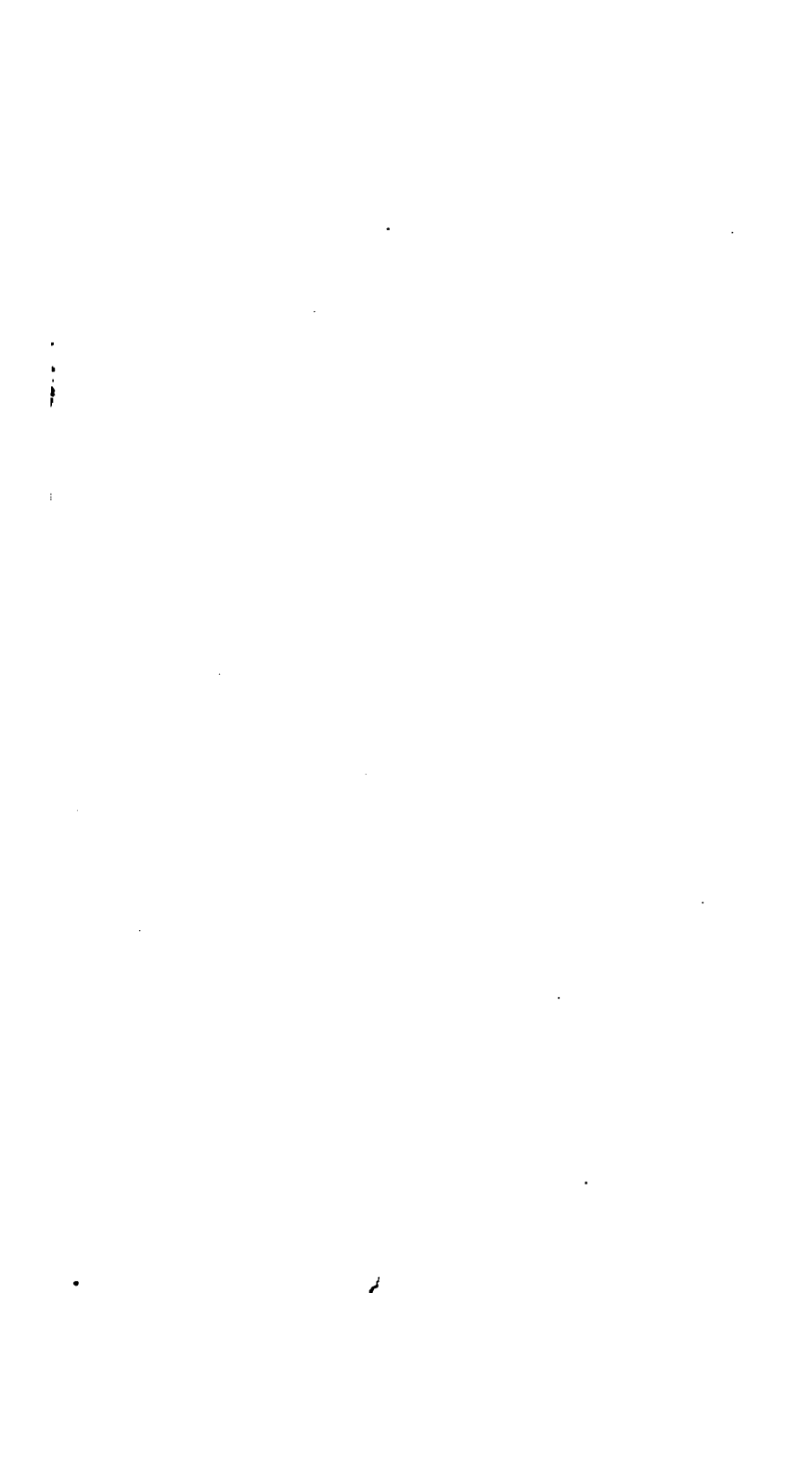
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